METRO / A17
Rizal provincial board suspends Rodriguez town mayor for 60 days

BUSINESS / B1
Budget deficit lowest in a decade

SPORTS / A21
Manny Pacquiao said to have been swindled again

WORLD / A20
Amy Winehouse grabs 5 Grammy awards

Abalos got $1M in advances from ZTE, says JDV III

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Nestor M Burgos Jr. and Jocelyn R. Uy

BENJAMIN ABALOS JR. RECEIVED "more than $1 million" in advances from ZTE Corp. for brokering the $329 million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal awarded to the Chinese company, whistle-blower Jun "Rey" de Venecia III yesterday told the Senate inquiry into the deal.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the advances

ABALOS P.A1

Joker goes wild over fan, fellow Bicolano

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. JOKER ARROYO yesterday defused whistle-blower Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr.'s crisis-exposed inconsistencies and lack of fairness and took a surprise hit

JOKER A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, February 12, 2008 | 44 | 6 sections | Vol. 22 / No. 66 | P18 | website: www.inquirer.net

ATUTUBO AND MACAPAGAL: From Malolos to Los Baños.

NAZON: Whose security?

BAUTISTA: Conspiring for others?

ATIENZA: Lozada's boss.

DEFENSOR: Peace crusader/downer

GMA men, Lozada clash

Lawyer denies affidavit 'for the comfort of Malacañang'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

LAWYER ANTONIO SALTIDO YESterday denied telling Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. to sign "for the comfort of Malacañang" an affidavit stating that the latter had never met with any government official or politician on the National Broadband Network (NBN) project.

"That's a stupid thing to say," Saltidos said at the Senate hearing on the scrapped $329-million NBN deal with China's ZTE Corp.

Saltidos said he was forced to break his silence after Lozada had "implied some professional misconduct on my part" in his testimony on Friday, specifically Lozada's allegation about a part of the affidavit.

"I didn't say that because Malacañang will fall over for that paragraph

LAWYER A6

Church group calls on people to pray for truth

By Beverly T. Natividad and Leila B. Salaverria

WITH THE COUNTRY GRIPPED BY another scandal, a Church-based group yesterday called on the Christians faithful to pray for the truth to be known and to cap their prayers at the Edsa People Power shrine today at 3 p.m. (the hour of Christ's death).

Henrietta de Villa, chair of the Parish

CHURCH A12

Protection, execs claim; abduction, witness says

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. looks bewildered as he listens to the testimonies of government officials during the marathon Senate hearing on the controversial NBN deal on Monday.

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Doris Z. Pizzabiocon and TJ Burgonio

HE LOOKED BEWILDERED as a parade of administration witnesses disputed in a nationally televised Senate hearing his claim that he was kidnapped by soldiers, and suggestions that President Macapagal-Arroyo was somehow involved.

But Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. stood by his story that he was taken against his will on his arrival on Sunday from a weeklong trip to Hong Kong allegedly arranged by Ms Arroyo's aides to prevent him from testifying in a Senate inquiry into the alleged $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) project.

Lozada admitted he did not want to go to the Senate as administration officials affirmed, but he also said they treated two supervisor-police officers he had sought their help—that he wanted a stop to the death threats he had been receiving and his fear that he could not be if he testified.

The 43-year-old electronics engineer, who was presented by state-owned Philippine Forest Corp. (PHILFOREST) until he quit last week, wept as a succession of Malacañang and police officials led by Environment Secretary Lito Atienza stressed that he had not been abducted.

In frustration at one point during the Monday hearing, Lozada repeated his earlier story that he was asked to sign papers saying he knew nothing about the NBN deal as he was being driven around by soldiers who had grabbed him in the Pinoy Aquino International Airport (Naia).

"If I knew nothing, I don't know now what 'nothing' is," said Lozada, who claimed he had been receiving death

GMA FOCUS A6

GMA foes vow to stage big protest

By John M. Aurelio and DJ Yap

CHURCH-LED LEFTWING MILITANTS yesterday held a rally for the third day running in support of whistle-blower Rodolfo Noel "Sonny" Lozada Jr., as other groups warned of a bigger protest on Friday to demand the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"We will mobilize the anti-Arroyo forces to again ask for Ms Arroyo's resignation. This is just a prelude," Union rebel-allies Amold Padilla told reporters as the protesters pitched at the gates of the Senate while Lozada was testifying at the hearing on the scandal-ridden National Broadband Network (NBN) deal.

The protesters, who at one point numbered 200, said they would raise last their mass action on the anniversary of the Edsa I People Power revolution later this month.

In the late afternoon, representatives of the Interfaith Justice and Peace Network, as well as the Protestant-led Church People's Response, also held a prayer rally outside the Senate gates.

Bro. Gilbert Billena of the Interfaith JPN said his group supported Lozada's testimony and his exposés on the NBN deal.

"We want to dig deeper into the

GMA FOES A6

Obama sweeps 5 races, poised to win 3 others

WASHINGTON—BARACK OBAMA won the Maine caucuses to sweep all five weekend Democratic contests, gaining new momentum and further crowding rival Hillary Rodham Clinton's all-important delegate lead in their epic battle for the party's presidential nomination.

Obama also appeared poised to sweep Tuesday's Potomac primaries—a trifecta of races in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. The two states and the US capital all have sizable numbers of black Democratic voters, a constituency that has aided Obama in earlier contests.

A day before the ban in Maine on Sunday, Obama softened defeats in Nebraska, Washington state, Louisiana and the US Virgin Islands. She replaced her campaign manager in a shake-up of a presidential campaign struggling to overcome Obama's financial and political tally that came on the heels of his impressive showing in last week's "Super Tuesday" series of Democratic con-

OBAMA A10

East Timor president wounded in coup try

DILI, EAST TIMOR—REBEL soldiers on Monday shot and critically wounded East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta in his home in the capital Dili in a coup attempt that analysts said could spark renewed violence and political chaos in the recently independent nation.

Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao escaped an ambush in a separate rebel attack on his motorcade.

Army spokesperson Maj. Gustavo da Conceicao said rebel leader Alfredo Reinado and one of his men were killed in the attack on the home of Ramos-Horta. One of the presidential guards was also killed.

"I consider this incident a coup attempt against the state by Reinado and it failed," Gusmao told reporters. "The attempt to kill the prime minister and president today failed, and only the president was injured."

EAST TIMOR A12

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

EZ2 FOUR DIGIT

5 13 5 6 2 1

SUERTRES

9 9 6 3 6 7

MEGALOTTO 6/45

4 12 13 19 33 42

P67,335,998.40

COA finds CHEd project anomalous

Audit of P550-M call center labs bares overprice, other irregularities

By Jerry E. Esplanada

GOVERNMENT AUDITORS HAVE FOUND THE Commission on Higher Education's P550-million call center training project to be highly irregular and grossly disadvantageous to the government.

In a report to CHEd acting Chair Romulo Neri, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer, the COA recommended the suspension of the agency's contract with the private firm wherein Ehdel Solutions Inc. (ehSI) "still is ambiguous and disadvantageous provisions are resolved."

The COA recommended the renegotiation of the contract before entering up of call centers training laboratories in various schools, also called the Integrated Multi-Site Business Process Outsourcing Institution. Contract (IMBPO-IC).

Call center laboratories were 7% percent completed in six universities when the COA audit team conducted its audit last July 25 to August 3.

The audit report also urged the CHEd to "terminate the contract and pay ehSI a penalty of only P5 million, which is nothing [compared] to what was already invested by the firm (P67.1 million)."

ehSI, noted the COA, will "gain everything if the business becomes highly profitable since there is no profit-sharing provision in the contract" with either CHEd or the host state universities and colleges (HEIs) where the call centers are located."

The COA, however, did not call for sanctions against CHEd top officials behind the project.

Former CHEd Chair Carlos Primo had ordered the implementation of the project. The budget for the project was released to the CHEd during Neri's term as budget department head.

Prior, some head of the state-supervised Central Chemicals Inc. (Cocochem), had said CDA representatives were with them during the early stages of the project.

But in October, Neri ordered an in-house inquiry upon the request of CHEd Commissioner Nona Ricafort and the 15,000-strong Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

The initial CHEd probe blamed the bids and awards committee (BAC) for its failure to declare a failed bidding.

Rigging denied

"There were grounds to do so. Given the magnitude of the project, it would have been prudent to do so," said CHEd interim rigidity.

The BAC is headed by Deputy Executive Director Julito Vitriolo, with Evelyn Wapiza as vice chair and Reginia Porter, Rolando Lovita and Bernard Caballero as members.

Vitriolo, however, earlier denied allegations the BAC had rigged the bidding in favor of ehSI.

In a 36-page report to the commission and bans, Neri cited the project was exempted by more than P100 million, among other irregularities.

The same report cited "excess project costs" for civil works and pre-operating expenses, amounting to P66.72 million and P67.31 million, respectively.

The COA report also questioned the P94.3-million outlay for project equipment and software, considering the CHed would recover only P116 million from loan payments from ehSI during the five-year duration of the project.

There was also unsparing in the construction of at least six buildings intended to house call center laboratories, the report said.

Ricafort had also disclosed that the project first presented to Neri in August was "completely different" from the one conceptualized and approved during the time of Primo.

She claimed the concept of the call center project had been altered from the mere development of a curriculum to the construction of laboratories. The project cost then ballooned to P500 million from its original price tag of P360 million.

Lion's share

She also complained that the Polytechnic University of the Philippines got the lion's share of P208 million from the original P500 million budget, contrary to the original plan to put up call center laboratories in at least 25 schools nationwide.

Before the project was put on hold, call center laboratories were being set up at PUP and Technological University of the Philippines, both in Manila; Don Mariano Marcos State University in La Union; Tarlac State University; Pangasinan State University, and the Laguna Polytechnic State University.

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Ignoring NBN controversy, GMA dwells on positive in Pampanga

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—PAMPANGA (AP)—Despite the controversy surrounding the National Broadband Network (NBN) project and that he had been snubbed by government forces.

Ms. Arroyo, described as a pro-regional pain, pledged to dwell on education and other programs of her administration and the results of the economic boom the administration had instituted as she addressed the alumni of the Pampanga High School from which her father graduated. At left is Pampanga Gov. Ed Panlilio who the President reportedly barely spoke to, apparently because he had blown the whistle on alleged bribery in Philcomsat last year.

Vice Gov: Panlilio 'underperforming'

By Allison W. Lopez and Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

PAMPANGA VICE GOV. JOSELITO Cuaso yesterday accused governor-politician Gov. Eddie Panlilio of "underperforming," saying the latter had yet to deliver on social services in Pampanga even with Cuaso at his disposal.

Cuaso, a guest at yesterday's Kapihan sa Manila Hotel forum, said that contrary to "misconceptions" that it was gunning up on the governor, the provincial board had approved a P467-million budget for Panlilio's projects.

But the governor, he said, had "only implemented one out of 19 projects" since he assumed office last July.

"We want to make it clear that we made available to him almost all the funds he requested. The problem is implementation, not legislation or obstruction," said Cuaso, the board's presiding officer.

The vice governor is an ally of defeated gubernatorial candidate Lilia Pineda, who lost to Panlilio in the May 2007 elections.

Panlilio, Cuaso said, deserved to be credited with increasing Pampanga's quarry collection by millions of pesos, but said the governor was inexperienced on the development and implementation of long-term plans.

While other provinces had implemented their programs, Cuaso said, people of Pampanga had yet to receive social services and see infrastructure projects rise due to Panlilio's neglect.

The collection of quarry fees had also gone down from P24 million in July 2007 to P16 million in December based on the treasurer's reports, he said, but Panlilio had yet to address the problem.

Cuaso claimed that anomalies were beginning to attend the collection, pointing out that false receipts had begun to proliferate.

"We are asking, 'Can we put it longer to office, dahil kapag [you're] inconsistent in collections? Where you can channel that from P24 million it went down to P16 million?'" he said.

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Foreign investments drop 5.6%

By Doris C. Dumlao

A TOTAL OF $1.9 BILLION IN NET FOREIGN direct investments (FDI) flowed into the country in the first 11 months of 2007, about 5.6 percent lower year-on-year, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday.

FDIs represent investments in brick-and-mortar businesses that are usually capital- and labor-intensive, such as factories, power plants, mining or business process outsourcing ventures.

Although the country garnered more foreign money due to its impressive economic performance in 2007, net FDI flows were tempered by local companies' use of improved profitability to settle loans with their mother firms abroad, BSP Gov. Amando Tetangco Jr. said in a statement.

At November alone, the net FDI amounted to only $13 million, lower than the $460 million inflow in the same period in 2006.

But the BSP chief noted that net equity capital infusion—a key component of FDI—rose by nearly 34 percent in the first 11 months to $1.9 billion.

"These were channeled largely into the manufacturing, services, construction, mining, real estate, financial intermediation and agricultural industries," Tetangco said.

Manufacturing sub-sectors that have benefited from the inflows are those engaged in the production of electronics, health and chemical products, food, automotive services, decorative crafts and medical products.

In the services sector, the gainers are those engaged in international tourism, information technology development and multimedia service businesses.

Bulk of the inflows came from the United States, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Germany and the United Kingdom.

During the 11-month period, reinvested earnings, or the portion of FDI plowed back to local enterprises, increased by 36 percent to $231 million, from the $256 million posted in the previous year.

6 RP films vie in Berlin film fest

By Cynthia D. Bulaong

A RECORD SIX PHILIPPINE films are competing in the ongoing 58th Berlin International Film Festival or Berlinale which runs from Feb. 7 to 17 in Germany.

A dispatch from Chanjo d'Albufero Lenlo Baja of the Philippine Embassy in Berlin said the festival featured on Feb. 10 the world premiere of the Philippines-Iceland co-production entitled "The Amazing Truth about Queen Raquela" directed by Lilad de Flores Jr. becomes and starring Raquela Rute.

Five other Philippine films will be shown in the festival's "Forum" and "Berlinale Expanded" section. These films are "Orbit" directed by Jim Libiran; "Tribu" directed by Baldo Imee Ma. Mendoza; the world premiere of "The Mirrored House of an Engineer in Search of Mechanical Infidels" directed by Khavn de la Cruz; a Philippines-Dutch and Swiss co-production entitled "Death Row Superstar" directed by Mes de Guzman; and "Years When I was a Child Outside" (Family Mole) Chained) directed by John Torres.

A highlight of the Berlinale is a panel discussion on experimental films in the Philippines on Feb. 13 with panelists John Torres, Director Ia Le Cross and Raffiel Tetteoh.

New ballet talent

Meanwhile, Philippine Ambassador to Switzerland Wilfredo Jose Fabros reported that Maryellen Libiran Jr., a promising 15-year-old Filipino ballet student at the Ballet Studio Studio in the Philippines, won the first in perform in a competition of 20 finalists at the 30th International Competition for Young Dancers of the Prix de Lausanne last week.

Libiran executed two dance categories, the classic variation in Le Lac des Cygnes by Tchaikovsky and a variation of the song "Bombing by 19th century composers Stephen Foster.

The competition, held at the Beaulieu Theatre in Lausanne, Switzerland, from Jan. 28 to Feb. 3, drew 284 contestants aged 15 to 18 years old.

Libiran's parents is in the competition finals. Alicia Martinez, a 13-year-old from Barcelona won the first prize.

Fabros said three ballet academies in Hamburg, Antwerp and Zurich offered Libiran a three-year scholarship.

22 fishers still missing after 3 months

By Cynthia D. Bulaong

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO HAS sought the Department of Foreign Affairs' help in the search for the 22 Filipino fishermen who have been missing since November after their boat sank off Pag-asa, Palawan, at the height of storm Lando.

Specifically, De Castro asked the DFA to inquire of the embassies of China, Malaysia and Taiwan if the fishermen may have landed on the territories of those countries.

Some members of the fishermen's families—Alma Flores, Tessie Garcia and Angel Abanes—came to De Castro's office last week to seek his help in finding the men who may have been swept away by high waves as cited in Abs and North Danger in the Spratly Islands. The Philippines, China, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam are claiming the respective sweeping or claiming islands in the Spratlys island group.

In January, De Castro received a report the fishermen were spotted on islands belonging to Malaysia. The Vice President alerted the DFA which looked into the report.

The DFA later requested for De Castro that the search for the fishermen on the coastal areas of Thailand be stepped up.

Among the missing fishermen were Henry Sandoval, 30; Roger Hoyas, 60; Ian Garcia, 27; Aderio Orgino, 43; Manuel Banquia, 25; Gilbert Vargas, 33; Eugenio Gorra, 46; Philip Hoyas, 19; Mondilog Banquia, 30; Bea Macaraeg, 30; Nicky Cosas, 27; Mark Brenilla Hoyas, 24; Elmer Caguete, 30; Edwin Dela Cruz, 49; Ryan Garcia, 49; Ryan Banta, 22; Hermilito Malagtas, 37; Elmer Flores, 46; Andrew Hales, 28, and Daniel Dapino.

Rules eased for Koreans wanting to live in RP

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AS AN ACT OF RECIPROCITY, the government has relaxed the issuance of permanent residence visas to Koreans in the Philippines after the Korean government had granted citizenship in over 4,000 Filipinos in their country.

The move is also in line with the government thrust to make it easier for foreign investors to stay in the country.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said the new guidelines—which took effect on Jan. 29, said Koreans nationals married to Filipino citizens or to permanent resident aliens, or who were the sons or daughters of permanent resident aliens, shall henceforth be granted a permanent resident visa.

Earlier, Korean Ambassador Hong Kang-ki informed the Bureau of Immigration (BI) that 4,197 Filipinos had been granted Korean citizenship and 64 more were holding permanent resident visas.

Libanan's memorandum was addressed to Associate Commissioner Marvin Rivera, saying the new guidelines—which took effect on Jan. 29, said Koreans nationals married to Filipino citizens or to permanent resident aliens, or who were the sons or daughters of permanent residents aliens, shall henceforth be granted a permanent resident visa.

Earlier, Korean Ambassador Hong Kang-ki informed the Bureau of Immigration (BI) that 4,197 Filipinos had been granted Korean citizenship and 64 more were holding permanent resident visas.

Libanan's memorandum was addressed to Associate Commissioner Marvin Rivera, saying the new guidelines would expedite the implementing guidelines of the memorandum within 30 days.

"We will make the procedures as simple as possible, without prejudice, of course, to national security," Libanan said.

The BI had earlier announced that previously restricted Chinese nationals would also be allowed new stays in the Philippines permanently as long as they invest $45,000 (about P1.8 million) in the country or marry a Filipino.

The guidelines for the issuance of permanent resident visas to Chinese citizens were contained in a Bureau memorandum dated Dec. 20, 2007.

PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
No. 2008-004-a

Bidding for the Procurement of Janitorial Services for Two (2) Years

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), through the Corporate Operating Budget (COB) 2007 and continuing appropriations of 2008, intends to apply the sum of PHP 18,000,000.00 per year as the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) for a period of two (2) years to eligible parties under the project for the Procurement of Janitorial Services for Two (2) Years. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

Prospective bidders from duly eligible Bidders for the said procurement with the following specifications:

1. The winning bidder should be a reputable supplier of janitorial services and other janitorial services for the last two (2) years with a minimum of 100 employed personnel (services that has a pool of well-trained personnel that can provide adequate and reliable janitorial-type services to ensure orderliness and sanitation within PhilHealth's premises; services the capacity and ensure that all safety and precautionary measures are observed at all times);
2. The winning bidder shall provide PhilHealth with forty three (43) janitorial personnel that shall render 8 hours of work every day from Monday to Saturday on a shifting schedule from 6:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (unless otherwise changed by the shifting schedules duly requested in writing by PhilHealth Regional Offices) and on Sundays and Holidays (Regular Holidays/Special Holidays). The team leader or supervisor shall render eight (8) hours of service per weekday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. inclusive of rest (1) hour break time for meal and rest;
3. The winning bidder shall provide PhilHealth with various types of needed tools, supplies, materials and equipment. All materials to be provided by the winning bidder should be of guaranteed high-grade quality to ensure and maintain maximum cleaning results.

Bidding will be conducted through open and competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and is restricted to Filipino Citizens/Sole Proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws of regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino Citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 and subject to Commonwealth Act 138. Only duly Pre-Qualified Bidders shall have the eligibility status and be allowed to participate in the bidding process.

Interested bidders may obtain further information from the Secretariat for the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) at the Corporate Office at PhilHealth Plaza, Ground Floor, Citystate Centre, 709 Shaw Blvd., Pasig City and inspect the Bidding Documents from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents should be purchased by interested Bidders from February 12 - 21, 2008 at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the cost of the Bidding Documents in the amount of P5,000.00 by the authorized representative shall receive the Bidding Documents personally.

PhilHealth shall make its BAC Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on February 21, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. at the MMC Conference Room, 4th Floor, PhilHealth Corporate Office, 709 Shaw Boulevard, Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be submitted to the MMC Conference Room on or before March 7, 2008, 10:30 a.m. The official time shall be based on the said local standard at the MMC Conference Room. Late bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be on March 7, 2008, 10:30 a.m. at the MMC Conference Room. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

CY 2008 to CY 2007 to the relevant period for submission should not be required by PhilHealth to be submitted.

PhilHealth reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

For further information, please refer to:
Secretariat for the Bids and Awards Committee of the Central Office
MR. JOSEPH D. VERGARA
BAC Head
Bids and Awards Committee for Goods and Services

(PD) February 13, 2008

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, February 12, 2008
1st Week of Lent

1st Reading: Is 55:10-11
Gospel: Mt 6:7-15

Jesus said to his disciples, "When you pray, do not use a lot of words, as the pagans do, for they think that the more they say, the more they will be heard. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need, even before you ask him.

"This, then, is how you should pray:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come
and your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today the kind of food we need.
Forgive us what we owe you,
just as we have forgiven those who owe us
what is due.
Do not bring us to the test
but deliver us from the evil one.
"If you forgive others what they owe you, your Father in heaven will also forgive yours. If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your mistakes."

Commentary:
Sir Augustine said that there is not a single prayer in the entire Bible that is not also to be found in the Our Father. With just four sentences, Jesus teaches us how to pray for a lifetime.

We pray to "Our Father" We are united in our prayer with our brothers and sisters all over the world, as well as with the souls in purgatory and the saints of heaven. The "Our Father" is a person going to work, or a student studying for an exam, or a mother looking for a lost child. Anything we do that is not wrong can be a silent prayer, if we do it. It echoes across the globe and into eternity. Though we pray personally, we never pray alone.

(Human Communications Foundation, Inc., 8 Mariano St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City, UP P.O. Box 154, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City, tel. (632) 981-8500, 981-8501, fax no.: (632) 925-43-97, e-mail: info@hcf.ph, Website: http://www.hcf.ph/dailygospel, Philippine Catholic Resources in the Philippines and Overseas Missions in the Philippines, Chinese (CHI), Japanese (JPN), Korean (KOR), Spanish (SPA), Italian (ITA), Latin (LAT), English (ENG), Filipino (FIL). E-mail: dailygospel@hcf.ph, dailygospel@gmail.com)

ATO getting ready for November audit

By Tarra Quismundo

THE AIR TRANSPORTATION OFFICE is working double-time ahead of the arrival in nine months of an audit team from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for a weeklong inspection it is said would be more comprehensive than last year's air safety inspection by the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The Inquirer learned yesterday that the ICAO team, a 100-member organization that sets down international civilian air travel regulations, will be in the Philippines on Nov. 19-27 to check on the country's compliance with and implementation of the regulations the ATO had adopted in the local aviation industry under its Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program (Usoap).

Usoap aims to "promote global aviation safety" through a regular audit of member states "to determine ... its state's capability for safety oversight," particularly its enforcement of "critical elements of a safety oversight system ... [and] of safety-relevant Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), associated procedures, guidance material and safety-related practices."

The results of the audit came as the ATO has been grappling with recently the deficiencies the FAA found in its audit of the country's air safety practices, procedures and personnel.

US inspectors flunked the ATO in its international safety audit last year and classified the Philippines as a Category 2 country, a group of nations deemed noncompliant with base standards.

The SSA downgrade imposed restrictions on the US operations of flag-carrier Philippine Airlines, the only local airline currently flying into US states and territories.

ATO Executive Director Daniel Omengan Jr. said the agency will focus on five aspects of air safety regulations: The safe transport of dangerous goods, personnel licensing, operations based on adopted civil air transport regulations, airworthiness of aircraft and airport safety regulations.

"Maybe we will see something great coming out of this audit. We're very confident in what we're doing," Omengan said in an interview yesterday.

I'm really sick, says solon

By Lila B. Salaverria

HE WAS REALLY SICK AND WAS NOT ACcorded special treatment by prison authorities when he was allowed to be hospitalized, Bikol Prince well and check in at a private hospital, according to murder convict and former Occidental Mindoro Rep. Jose Villarosa.

Villarosa defended his continuing confinement at the Makati Medical Center since December saying he felt that he never left prison because the area being guarded around the clock at the hospital.

Villarosa, whose wife Annalita is now the Occidental Mindoro representative, filed a comment in the Court of Appeals upon the latter's directive. The court had sought his comment after former Occidental Mindoro Gov. Eduardo Quimbo charged that Villarosa was not really sick but was being accorded special considerations by prison authorities.

"The various serious illnesses of accused-appellant Villarosa has required urgent treatment, which the NBI Hospital was incapable of providing, necessitated the temporary confinement of appellant in a hospital outside of the NBI," Villarosa said in his comment dated Jan. 24.

"Besides, herein appellant is still technically in prison because he is presently under light guard at the Makati Medical Center 24 hours a day by the Bureau of Corrections security guards," he said.

According to Villarosa, he was brought to the NBI on emergency referral on Dec. 7, 2007, after he suffered a heart attack while confessing these pains nevertheless persisted, hypertension and type-2 diabetes.

On Dec. 20, he said a malignant cancer was discovered in his left lung. He sought Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's permission to transfer to St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City for a scan to validate the cancer finding. Permission was granted and he went to St. Luke's on Dec. 26.

On Jan. 3, he underwent an operation at MMC to remove the cancer cells.

Villarosa explained his December-2008 hospital confinement as well, which Quimbo had also questioned, saying Villarosa had a penchant for getting out of prison during the holidays.

Villarosa said he was brought to the MMC on Dec. 3, 2006, under heavy guard as an emergency case. As he does for was suffering from a urinary tract infection, type-2 diabetes, hypertension and arrhythmia, as shown in his blood or urinary tract.

Villarosa was one of those convicted of murdering Eliza Quezon City court for the 1997 killing of Bud and Michael Quintos, sons of Eliando. Convicted along with him were six farmers.

RP named to UN agency board

THE PHILIPPINES has been appointed to the Advisory Board of the United Nations Development Fund for Democracy (UNDEF) which promotes and supports democracy throughout the world, according to a report from the Philippine Mission to the United Nations in New York.

Ambassador Florencio Baviera Jr. said the UNDEF was a UN financial trust fund established in 2005 to support democracy around the globe. It finances projects that build and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights and ensure the participation of all groups in democratic processes.

Deputy Permanent Representative and Chargé d'Affaires Lolita Lontok said in the same report the Philippines will join five other member states — Mali, Mozambique, Peru, Senegal and Slovakia — appointed to the 15-member UNDEF board by the UN secretary general on the basis of geographic representation. Cynthia D. Balana

GMA men, Lozada clash

From page A1

dream team he was linked to the broadband project to vote electronically government officials unknown.

He had said that former Socioeconomic Secretary Romulo Neri had asked him to "moderate the greed" in the telecommunications project, which was swapped following allegations of bribery and corruption. His Amoyo's husband has been implicated in the deal.

Arienza cleared Mr. Arroyo of any culpability in the alleged abduction, insisting that he was acting on his own when he helped Lozada, the resigned chief of Philforest, which is under Arienza's department.

Senators knew moves

Arienza said Lozada had been influenced by some senators recently to blow the whistle on the NBN project with China.

Airport and police authorities were also adamant that Lozada came with them of his own accord after his arrival on Tuesday.

Lozada's wife Lourdes, however, were pointed at Ex Aiello Green Hills where Lozada and his family stayed before he went to the Senate to testify.

Arienza said he felt "violated" for being dragged into the alleged abduction.

He also denied that there was an kidnapping at all. Never was there a time that Lozada was deprived of his rights," Arienza said.

"I talked to him and told him they were government men and they were out to protect him. I told him they would take him to a safe house. I called him up again that night and he said he was fine," Arienza said. "He wasn't under incommunicado nor forced against his will.

'I never mentioned Ma'am'

"He said I involved Eli Glaberal Secretary Eduardo Ermita] and Ma'am [the President], that is not true, I never mentioned Ma'am in official business in getting him protected," Arienza said.

"I was acting on my own, what I told him was let us clear with Ma'am your legal problems is refusing to appear in the Senate," Arienza said. Manuel "Manny" Gaite is deputy executive secretary for legal affairs who also appeared at the hearing to deny he had arranged Lozada's return from Hong Kong.

"I thought I was the only one he was relying on to save his life but as it turned out he was in contact with some senators," Arienza said.

He said that some senators knew that Lozada would not be going to Lozada. Lozada's excuse for skipping the Senate hearing last month—and that some senators knew he would return home early. He said some senators also knew he would be resigning from Philforest.

"I did not know all of this. All these questions must be raised to Lozada," Arienza said.

Government downfall

Arienza also denied that he demanded Lozada from testifying because it would lead to the downfall of the government. "I only told him to be sure about his testimony, do not rely on hearsay or gossip, stick to your full knowledge," he said.

Several times during the hearing, witnesses were made to someone called "Big Boy," but it was unclear who that was although Arienza claimed that Lozada had told him about how a high government official had spat at him, which he did not report at the Senate based on his advice.

The hearing had opened that Gen Gerbonsio Jose Miguel Arroyo had spat at Lozada on a golf course. "I told him, don't say anything that is not true. When he did not say that [how, then it was not true," Arienza said.

But Lozada denied that he ever discussed with Arienza a spitting incident, saying Arienza probably just read it in the hearings. Discussion on the incident was supposed to quite a bit than. Arienza indicated the incident showed Lozada was less than candid.

Despite the combined assault by the government witnesses on his testimony, Lozada throughout the hearing did not yield an inch.

He maintained that the men who took him at the airport invited to identify themselves and did not make him feel they were his executioners at all.

When he asked to be brought to his home in Iloilo, they drove him south, further away from where he lived, he said. He also said that his trip to Hong Kong was a government plot to prevent him from testifying at the Senate.

Airport officials' account

Naia General Manager Alfonso Cusi said that his office was not told of Lozada's departure at his arrival until 4 p.m. last Tuesday when he got a request from his deputy Angelo Reyes, the security chief of the government, to help Supt. Paul Almeralbas, deputy chief of the Philippine National Police Special Protection Office (PSPO), and Rodolfo Valencia of the Aviation Security Group who were in mufti.

Lozada claimed that he was promised by people who met him—later was used, the military people with military batteries, people were dressed in T-shirts, they were armed and that they were wearing IDs," Cusi said.

"After the investigation, the persons showed them who we were, the people were not armed people, they were wearing IDs, people were wearing police barongs, and Mr. Lozada was moving freely, not being pulled or dragged. We were concerned about this statement of a kidnapping in the airport, this could be bad for the country," Cusi said.

He said that Lozada even went to the toilet and stayed there for 18 minutes and that his cell phone was always with him from his arrival in his exit from the airport.

Security video

"The recording would show that there was no force, arms or military men who picked him up. This was done in police coordination. If he was forced, why didn't he call on those nearby for him such as with all those in the waiting area for his arrival? If he was abducted there would have been a commotion," Cusi said.

He was questioned on why a team from the Senate Office of the Sergeant at Arms that was in charge of the airport security was not informed by airport services on Lozada for fulfilling a close up at the Senate hearing was not allowed to get near Lozada. He replied that there was no proper coordination with airport authorities and that the Senate team did not mention Lozada in the list it was going to fetch.

Sen. Rina Perez Cayetano, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, said Lozada's name was left out of its letter request as part of the Senate strategy but the sergeant at arms did make a call at 4 p.m. and informed Cusi's deputy that the team was out to meet the senator.

Cusi revealed that Lozada was led from the tube to the pre-departure area, then down the elevator to the VIP parking on the tarmac. "This is a courtesy we extend to high ranking persons," he said.

He top man on the agenda was the opposition's round on Lozada's revelations implicating top government officials and the president's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, in the NBN deal.

"We're not saying he (Lozada) is perfect or that he's blameless or that he's without skeletons. But we support him for telling the truth," Tinsuan told reporters.

He added that the group also urged that politicians would take a backseat in the people, who should be the ones to air their grievances.

"It's time for ordinary employees, drivers and teachers to also make their voices heard," Tinsuan said.

Razon denies kidnapping

PNP Director General Avelino Razon Jr. said that there was neither kidnapping nor abduction and that the PNPO team led by Maranatha was provided Lozada upon his request.

"The PNP did not hold him but were in fact securing his person. Lozada went with the PNP out of his own free will," said Razon.

Razon clarified that when Lozada was finished, Maranatha was accompanied by retired army Maj. Rodolfo Saloron, not BGen Roger Ybanez as erroneously reported in media. "That he is alive and well means we have a witness," said Razon.

Maranatha stressed that no force was used against Lozada and that he was free to go where he wanted to when they picked him up at the airport. He also debunked Lozada's claim that he had introduced himself as "general" to Lozada and the latter encountered that it was part of "misrepresentation."

Lozada security man

Maranatha said that he was there invited him—a master sergeant and his partner, another sergeant—to the third floor of La Salle Green Hills and they were identified by Lozada's sister, Carmen, as his brother's personal security man.

Former Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said that Lozada left only a few minutes before the meeting at La Salle on Feb. 8 that made it appear that he had been paid. Lozada to keep silent about the kidnapping.

Defensor said that as advised, he called Lozada to ask if it was true he was abducted by the police and that he even offered to help him escape. But Defensor said Lozada assured him that he was not kidnapped and that he was being treated well.

Defensor explained that he never tried to stop Lozada from testifying an rebut he knew about the deal. Defensor said that he only suggested that Lozada hold a press conference because the filing of petitions for habeas corpus and a writ of amparo was unfair to the police who had secured him and had "allowed" Maranatha.

During their talk, Defensor said that Lozada's only complaint was that his security did not pick up his wife who was waiting for him at the arrival area.

Defensor said that he only gave Lozada P10,000 in a sealed envelope for his expenses after Lozada told him he had recovered from being flung because he had run out of cash. During the hearing, Lozada retained the money in Defensor and repeated his earlier claim that Defensor had asked him to drop he had been abducted. "That's one of the salient point of my testimony. But I have to stand by my word," Lozada said.

Villar outburst

In a rare outburst, Senate President Manuel Villar lambasted Malacañang for obstructing congressional officials from appearing before the inquiry.

"I just want to clarify, you were trying to arrest Mr. Lozada, Enzo others? From the Senate," Villar said.

"I would like to clarify that the senate, when issuing invitations for executive persons to appear before inquiries is only as it is on its duties mandated by the Constitution to provide the system of check and balance in government. We are not here to harass people. We are doing this in pursuit of the truth," Villar said.

GMA foes vow to stage big protest

From page A1

problems of the PBN anomaly, where the First Family has been implicated," he added.

Moral ascendancy lost

Bilkins said the Interfaith 2PR was supporting the call of other military groups for Mr. Arroyo to resign.

"She has no more moral ascendancy to lead and govern our country," he added.

Other religious groups that supported outside the Senate gates included the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines.

The political opposition is also planning to take to the streets for a big rally on Friday to pressure Mr. Arroyo to step down.

"People power is never planned. It has its own momentum," said Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo. "What we're trying to see is how widespread public unrest is in terms of width and depth."

Makati or Manila

"We should understand the dynamics of mass movement ... The important thing is to open up the venue for people to take action," Ocampo said.

Details of the planned rally are still the subject of talks between opposition leaders indicated that it might be held either in the Makati Central Business District or in the Don Chino Roces (Binondoko) bridge in Manila.

"The situation is more precarious now for the administration, unlike the time of the 'Hello Garci' controversy," lawyer Adel Tamano said, referring to alleged cheating in the 2004 presidential election supposedly involving Mr. Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

"Back then, it was just the opposition versus the administration. Now there's infighting within the administration," he said, citing "cracks" in the ruling party as reflected in the recent ouster of Speaker Jose de Venecia.

UNO and allies

Yesterday, United Opposition president and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay called a meeting at the Makati City Hall of various groups to discuss their next course of action.

The meeting was attended by among other people, Representatives Crispin Beltran, Liza Maza and Teodoro Casiño of Bayan Muna, Jose Mayor IV Ejercito, former Senators Ernesto Maceda, Loisto Shahani and Ernesto Herrera, and activist leaders Lingayan Gunigundo and Boy Cortez.

Lawyer denies affidavit 'for the comfort of Malacañang'

From page A1

where he said the thing (NBN) was overpriced. I know the Malacañang line is that this broadband deal is fair and shovelboard," Bautista said.

In the affidavit, Lozada said: "On the basis of my evaluation, I consider that the ZTE proposal for a broadband network was too expensive at the price quoted for it I then recommended to the then Socioeconomic Planning Secretary [Romulo] Neri not to approve the proposal."

Bautista said Lozada was averse to the provision because he "has been talking to Joey de Venecia."

Lozada, however, disavowed Bautista as his lawyer, claiming that Bautista was foisted on him by Malacañang. But Bautista said "that an advisory client-attorneyship is not established by contract. It is established as soon as he solicits my opinion."

Bautista said he was contacted by Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite on Feb. 5 to meet with Lozada at Dulcinea restaurant in Cubao, Quezon City, at 8:30 p.m. to discuss Lozada's next move because the Senate subpoena at noon was box so his staff with an arrest warrant.

Bautista said he met Lozada at Dulcinea was the old and I signed it," Bautista said.

He said he advised Lozada to surrender to the Senate but needs because there was no subpoena but executive he could take to delay his appearance at the Senate hearing on the NBN deal.

"I told him I'd arrange for your surrender to the Senate. But will just tell the truth. My God! That's all there is to it. I told him I'd make arrangements the next day," said Bautista, a former partner at the Poblete Bautista law office of Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile and the late Sen. Heracleo Cayetano.

Bautista said that it was Lozada's idea to execute an affidavit which they discussed at the restaurant and that they agreed to meet at his office near the ABS-CBN studio in Quezon City for the final copy.

Bautista said Lozada stayed for about four hours in his office and home. The lawyer showed Lozada a copy of the affidavit that contained Lozada's corrections, which he claimed proved that Lozada was not forced to sign it.

"I recall that in his press conference, Lozada apologized for signing the affidavit. Why did he regret [it]? Here it is a lapse of judgment because it was not done under duress," said Bautista, who believed that Lozada required more "spiritual and emotional" support rather than legal help.

Gaite officiated by the suggestion that after 18 years of law practice that I will chair's documents that is null and void," Bautista, 70, said.

Joker goes wild over fan, fellow Bicolano

From page A1

In return

At the Senate inquiry into the projected $329-million National Broadband Network deal, Arroyo questioned Lozada on his family's motives for filing petitions for writs of amparo and habeas corpus even when he was already free.

The administration senator also questioned Lozada's alleged line for certain contracts, and TV networks.

But Arroyo was taken aback when Lozada countered that he never discriminated against anyone, and in fact had talked to the senator's wife at their house in Makati City.

"You said I was talking to cozy [Senator (Panfilo)] Lacson. Well, I also talked to your wife at your home, Attorney (Tony) Abaya brought me there. They asked me to go there," Lozada said, referring to private meetings they had in Cebu.

At this time, a surprised Arroyo told him not to drag in his wife's name, and Lozada apologized.

"You have been besmirching the names of everyone. Don't mess around with my wife," Arroyo said, sounding angry told the witness.

Lozada tried to explain that he was merely saying to explain how he was fair to everybody.

'You brought this up'

An angry Arroyo then said: "You're implicating every Tom, Dick, and Harry here."

Lozada replied: "What can I do? You brought this up."

Lozada, on the verge of tears, lamented that he never wanted to be part of the controversy. "A lot [of people] were talking to me, but I never wanted to be part of this. Mr. Senator, I'm an admirer of yours," said Lozada who, like Arroyo, is a Bicolano.

Arroyo then turned to ask Environment Secretary Lito Atienza, another Bicolano, if Lozada's flight to Hong Kong and plan to extend a courtesy stay in London.

Lozada did not say when the meeting with Arroyo's wife took place, and what they talked about. Mr. Arroyo was a friend of former Socioeconomic Secretary Romulo Neri.

Arroyo, whose turn to question Lozada came seven hours into the hearing, said the thing of the two petitions with the high tribunal—another of "forum shopping, which is considered by the court."

Lozada's wife and brother filed the petitions.

Dare' tells wife to write

"The point is this, you don't write to the court of habeas corpus, and this writ of amparo because these are what you call the gross series of liberty. These are extraordinary remedies," the senator said.

"We can't entertain them. If we tribe with it, it loses its reason. That's elementary."

Lozada explained that he wasn't aware that his wife and brother filed the petitions, but insisted that they filed them because they feared for his safety while under the custody of the Police Security and Protection Office (PSPO).

"Those were independent actions. I wasn't free as you would like me to believe," said Lozada. He said he was under the custody of Senior Supt. Hilel Mangonon, the deputy chief of the PSPO. "They were the ones in charge of me," he said.

Chequering law

"They filed those because they didn't know where the team of Colonel Maranatha would take me. They were free to have free movement, that's why they filed the petitions. I have no intention of chequering any law every provisions here."

Lawyer Antonio Bautista, who prepared Lozada's affidavit, corroborated the witness' claim that he wasn't aware that his wife and brother had filed the petitions.

"He said he didn't know anything about it," he said.

Arroyo also questioned Lozada's decision to grant interviews only to ABS-CBN, and not to newspapers. Lozada in his counter last year Lacson conferred the meeting.

"It smacks of bad faith. You're talking to some but you're not talking to us," the senator said.

It was at this point that Lozada said that he was granted interviews to GMA 7, and he talked with Arroyo's wife.

Abalos got $1M ...

From page A1

ABALOS: Is this what we call a hero?

received by Abalos when he was chair of the Commission on Elections could be grounds for the filing of plunder charges against him.

Late Friday, witness Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. told the Senate that Abalos had demanded a $130-million commission from the ZTE deal. Abalos has denied the allegation.

At a press conference in Mandaluyong City yesterday, Abalos cursed the aides on Lozada, reiterating that he had "fabricated" the accusations against him.

De Venecia reiterated his previous account that the President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, was promised $75 million in kickbacks from the deal.

De Venecia's revelation came before Sen. Richard Gordon asked Malacañang to take action against those involved in the recapped NBN deal.

Gordon urged the President to direct the Office of the Ombudsman and the Department of Justice to file cases against Abalos and other persons.

The senator said the President should not wait for the Senate inquiry into the ZTE deal to be completed before ordering an investigation and the filing of cases.

At 10 a.m. yesterday, Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez presiding said she had ordered the Preliminary Investigation and Administrative Monitoring Office to consolidate all the complaints and set public hearings beginning next week.

It took four months and the request of Lozada for the Office of the Ombudsman to determine how to classify dispose of the seven complaints filed by various individuals and groups in connection with the NBN deal.

Away from media glare

Strongly denying that the Office of the Ombudsman was stalling on cases involving the Arroyo administration, Gutierrez said her office had been investigating "quietly" and "away from the glare of media" in that it could "accord everybody due process."

"We want to make sure that the cases we filed in court will [pass] the scrutiny of the justices," she told reporters.

Flanked by other officials of the antigraft body, Gutierrez also announced the creation of a panel, headed by Overall Deputy Ombudsman Orlando Casimiro, to study the consolidated complaints and to file the **appropriate information in court if the evi**dence should warrant it.

And to show the antigraft body was going the extra mile in helping concern troopers close to the NBN deal, Gutierrez also **formed a fact-finding panel to look into the** alleged abduction of Lozada last week.

"We are doing this for the purpose of transparency and in light of recent developments in the Senate. We consider these cases of national interest," Gutierrez said, reading from a prepared statement.

Hearsay

Gordon did not include the President's husband among those who should be investigated and charged, saying all statements allegedly linking Mike Arroyo to the controversy were "hearsay" and would not stand up in court.

Besides, De Venecia, Lozada, former presidential consultant to former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri for the NBN project, linked the President's husband to the deal.

"A (the allegation against Arroyo) is still hearsay. But perception is even worse than reality," said Gordon.

He said the testimony of Lozada had strengthened the evidence against Abalos.

"I'm happy that he (Lozada) is coming out. Now we have a bigger case against Abalos (Romeo Sacimat Economic and Development Authority chief and now Commission on Education Chair) Neri (and) him a lot to explain," the senator said.

Gordon said there was corroborating evidence against Abalos. "There's (also) circumstantial evidence," he told reporters after speaking at the commemorative rites **marking the 22nd death anniversary of for**mer Gov. Evelio Javier in San Jose, Antique.

Contradictions

"Is this what we call a hero?" Abalos said, referring to Lozada.

The former Comelec chair said Lozada's narration of his involvement in the deal was filled with "contradictions" that belied his credibility.

Lozada, a telecommunication and information technology expert, was tapped by Neri in 2006 to oversee the computer feasibility study of the project. Lozada backed out after the deal.

Accompanied by his lawyer Salvador Panelo, Abalos reiterated that Lozada's **former testimony that he and De Venecia** had met before December 2006 was a "fabrication."

Abalos said Lozada told the Senate that he was tasked with reconciling De Venecia and Abalos' differences over the project in September, when according to de Venecia's affidavit, Abalos and De Venecia only met on Dec. 13, 2006.

When it was pointed out that Lozada was referring to the reconciliation of the participants of Amsterdam Holdings Inc. (AHI) and of ZTE and not necessarily to a meeting between the two of them, Abalos threw out this question: "How can I reconcile the two of you when you didn't meet?"

De Venecia is the founder and president of AHI, which submitted an unsolicited proposal to undertake the project, but lost the deal to ZTE.

Abalos said he did not broker the deal between the government and ZTE as the Chinese government had already contracted the company in its contractor to a letter dated Dec. 2, 2006 to Malacañang.

Permissible corruption

Abalos also questioned Lozada's recent release, noting that based on his Senate testimony, he violated both anti-corruption as long as it was "permissible."

He pointed out that Lozada, while opposed to his alleged demand of $130 million in kickbacks from the NBN deal, was **amenable to allowing him (Abalos) a $60** million commission.

"I thought you have a sense of morality. Do you know how much $60 million is? That is P3.5 billion. I thought you felt sorry for many people," Abalos said of Lozada.

That Lozada was open to some form of corruption raised doubts about his moral character and credibility, Abalos said.

Fear of being deposed

Gordon cajoled the 50 Arroyos to stop making "allusions" to people around her.

"She (the Arroyo) is cowed by the fear of being deposed by the powers of Estrada and his cohorts. She does certain things that she should not be doing. She has to make allowances to people around her," Gordon said.

He also called on the President to "lead and forget everything (else)."

"It's kind of hard because everybody is now questioning her credibility especially the First Gentleman, but nonetheless, you are President until the end of your term, or when you are impeached. It's never too late to fix up this nation," Gordon said.

Seven complaints since August

Since August last year, a total of seven complaints have been filed with the antigraft body in connection with the NBN project.

The first complaint was lodged by the National Bureau of Investigation against frustrated Sen. Jinggoy Estrada over what supposedly has the ZTE contract the night after it was signed in Boao, China, on April 21, 2007.

Also in August, Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla lodged a criminal complaint against Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza and two assistant secretaries for "giving unfair advantage" to ZTE. Executives of the Chinese firm were also named respondents.

On Sept. 24, 2007, lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr. requested the Ombudsman to investigate the President's husband and Abalos on their alleged links to the deal.

Francisco's legal move initiated the first complaint to directly name the President's husband in the controversy.

Less than a week later, on Oct. 3, another lawyer, Raul Pulido Bird, grafi complaint against then Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and his son Joey in connection with the deal.

Another graft complaint was filed the following day by Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel, this time, against Abalos for allegedly brokering the deal and bribing a Cabinet official and a businessman to ensure that the project would push through.

Two weeks later, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona supported the call to send all body to file a criminal complaint against Mr Arroyo, describing the deal free of presidential immunity as an "old, archaic" rule that applied to the kings of the past.

The most recent graft complaint was filed on Feb. 8 by Cibac Rep. Joel Villanueva, naming Mike Arroyo and Abalos as respondents.

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General to troops: Hold your opinions on NBN

By Nikko Dizon

AN ARMY GENERAL ONCE BEfriend of his year for criticizing a military road project on the tourist island of Boracay yesterday told the soldiers under him to keep their opinions to themselves amid the controversy sparked by the testimony of Rodolfo Noel Lacuata Jr., the latest witness in the scandal-ridden National Broadband Network (NBN) project.

"Our personal opinions are personal and private. As we listen and have access to what is happening in the political scene, we will keep our opinions to ourselves," Brig. Gen. Ricardo Morales said during the flag-raising ceremony at Army Headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Morales' remarks were quoted in a statement released to the media by the Army public information office.

The general addressed the troops amid the civilian personnel in his capacity as commander of Army Headquarters and the Headquarters Support Group.

Morales said: "The Philippine Army, especially in these lifetime, is in remain steadfast and loyal in the chain of command and to their Commander-in-Chief."

Morales reminded the soldiers that, "No one in this Army is indispensable."

Then an Army colonel, Morales (Class 1977) was relieved in June 2003 as commander of an infantry brigade in Davao del Norte after his e-mail message criticizing the military base for constructing a 60-room resort on Boracay was exposed in the media.

Morales, part of the Alpha-homecoming Alyansang Makabansa (AMA) that rebelled against the Marcos dictatorship in 1986), was arrested by presidential security forces shortly before the first Edsa People Power revolt broke out.

He was reinstated as a brigade commander on Bridal-ton after almost 18 months on the inactive list.

The Army statement yesterday quoted Morales as warning the soldiers "not to use their cellphone phones to spread text messages or rumors which may agitate the situation."

Morales said mobile phones had been used for the "personal purposes and selfish motives" of others.

"If you receive any information, any rumor, any text message that you should see one way or another, you will not pass on this text message or rumor, do not spread rumors. Do not pass on rumors," Morales said.

'Restrained' not 'suspended'

THE 56 SOLDIERS, INCLUDing three officers of the Army's elite Light Reaction Battalion, who were reported suspended by the military public the investigation into the deaths of eight civilians in Maimbung, Sulu, on Feb. 1 were ongoing were actually ordered "restrained" and not suspended by Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro.

"We'd like to clarify that the secretary of national defense did not use the word suspension during his visit to Sulu... his instruction was to restrain the soldiers from participating in other operations so that they would be readily available for any investigation," AFP spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro told reporters.

"The term suspension was never used. Restrained was the exact word, that was used," Bacarro said, referring to the memo issued by Teodoro.

Asked when "restrained" means, Bacarro said the soldiers would not be participating in combat operations.

The soldiers will remain in their camps, he said.

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INQUIRER

OPINION

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Cost of corruption

EDITORIAL

THE FAILED ATTEMPT OF THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION to prevent Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr., former president of Philippine Forest Corp., from testifying at the $329 million National Broadband Network project has once again focused public attention on the perennial problem of corruption.

Graft and corruption has been a fact of national life since post-Liberation days. Almost every administration has had its big and sensational graft cases. At every presidential election, one major issue that is always raised is graft and corruption. Opposition leaders denounce the graft being committed by the administration, but once they take over the reins of government, they also commit graft. It's just a case of different sets of people pigging out at the trough that is the national treasury at different times.

Economist Alejandro Lichauco said that the Philippines is perennially in crisis because of "the mutual mix of corruption and poverty and a consequent loss of popular confidence in government and the electoral process as instruments of change." The local rate, he said, is a poverty so massive and so intense as to have degenerated into a problem of mass hunger, and corruption that is as massive as the massive poverty. A deadly mix, indeed, that is killing tens of thousands of people.

Starting with the Marcos dictatorship, the Philippine crisis was characterized not only by corruption and poverty but also by human rights abuses and a culture of impunity. Bruce Van Voorhis, a member of the Asian Human Rights Commission, said that these aspects of the life of the nation are linked: "People are prone to a large extent because of widespread corruption; those who wield political power violate people's rights to retain and maintain that power, a lack of judicial punishment for the many instances impunity that permits corruption and human rights violations to continue. The cycle has sadly repeated itself too many times."

Corruption retards economic and social development, lowers the quality of public services and infrastructure and raises the prices of goods and services. In all these aspects, it is the poor who suffer the most because they cannot avail themselves, for instance, of the services of private doctors and hospitals or buy expensive goods. In some cases, corruption literally kills: for instance, a ship sinks and hundreds of people die because a coast guard officer was bribed to allow the overloaded, unseaworthy vessel to leave port.

In 2000, the World Bank estimated that corruption was costing the Philippine government $47 million a year (about P1.92 billion) or a massive $48 billion (P1.966 trillion) over the 20-year period to 1997. Think how many kilometers of roads and bridges and how many schoolhouses and hospitals that money could have built. Think of the other public infrastructure and public services that could have been improved with that kind of money. But all that public money went into the private pockets of corrupt, greedy government officials.

Graft and corruption flourishes because of the culture of impunity. Have you heard of any big fish being convicted of corruption and plunder, except deposed President Joseph Estrada? Yes, Estrada was convicted of plunder, but he did not spend even a day in a real prison. Only six words after his conviction, he was pardoned by President Macapagal-Arroyo. Was that any way to set an example for the other plunderers in government and to would-be grafters and plunderers?

And so the graft and corruption continues. But from time to time a ray of light pierces the darkness and gives the nation hope that we might yet be able to start punishing the grafters. Such a ray was Lozada, whose courageous and forthright testimony at the Senate may yet save the nation from the grip of scandalous, graft-ridden deals.

But what little we learn like Lozada cannot, just by themselves, ensure a successful campaign against corruption. Graft and corruption has become so ingrained in the national life that it is considered "normal." Every people like Lozada are ready to consider a 20-percent commission on government deals acceptable. But that should not be acceptable. A 20-percent commission is an illegal, immoral "cut" on a poor and overburdened people. They have to subsidize this, watch every government transaction that may be tainted with graft, and denounce officials who are stealing taxpayers' money—their money.

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'Shanghai policy'

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"THOUSANDS A BILL," THE NEWS SAID AFTER reading Inquirer's report. "Mass arrests cap exodus of Lozada," the engineer "shanghaied" by security agents—a charge strenuously denied by the administration.

The hesitant earlier use of term page phrases in "Guardian Angels"—Good Shepherd, Talitum and Daughters of Charity nuns—who linked arms to cover Neptali Gonzales II as he pre-dawn presses embarrassed aside. The media "were ordered to equip [him] out to the Senate inquiry so easily" on the ITE network scandal.

Before a polarized (but ribbon committee, Lozada linked First Insurance Asst Mgmt Corp. and ex-Comelec official Benjamin Abalos Sr. to a deal that ballooned from $132 million to $329 million.

"I'm not an ordinary lawyer," Mr. Antonio protested. Like Deputy Speaker Arroyo? "I share my husband completely," Diane Marsman Manpuyo Thatcher said. "We don't tell salary when I give a speech, and he does it the right places."

He is not alone like said Mr. Jardeleza, the outgoing household husband of Pakistan's late Benazir Bhutto.

Remember the San Francisco Examiner's report on crooked Marcos minister Alfy Besinga of air fraud in the coup electronic triggered People Power. If Besinga had been caught the tipping of million dollar Aquino's landslide over. "It's all about state funds," says Boston real Estate, mer's Liz Seaweiss attends Head. "How were we to know these couplers already were owned to us under license?" Marcos is hunted.

To the Senate inquiry Benedicto PNC Bar their was Malacañang to know that state would shield Lozada? Then later on to a cadal pha hunt in the Sierra gallery. Najeb shall guard your camp," the guidance noted.

The administration's Lozada round-'tidnapped for 27 hours when his escort threw that from Manila, Cavite to Los Baños—until diverted to attack because "medicines not for" in the trial. He caught protection, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon recalled.

By any line, Lozada told reporters. Armed security agents were spotted from room to airport officials in quiescent; while Lozada's family the beauty on guard at entry and media rushed about finish. Yet they, Lozada said his capsid as officials don be "asked for security." They dumped Lozada at La Salle before the Davao Brothers gave him sanctuary.

"It is democracy people should not be afraid of government. It is government that should be afraid of people," Sen. Panfilo Lacson said on a radio program. Take it from Sting Lacson now to national power from being a "star" of Marcos' secret agency, the Military Intelligence Security Group. The MISG specialized in torture, kidnapping and sabotage.

Master of state power for kidnapping never missed president like Manuel Quezon, Elpidio Quirino, Gerardo Aquino, Carlos Garcia to Felipe Gonzalez through his grandson, Tomas, to Cebu City mayor, reader in ITE scandal story over citizen-by vigilantes.)

Serial kidnapping plagues this nation. The Abu Sayyaf holdings for both, as cases in the Dos Palmas raid. Gen. Hit Director Filipinos were kidnapped for ransom, including Cesar Cela Espina-Cruz, Cherry Jo And the Free People's army "shanghai" for ideology and cash.

But these were by brigands. In contrast, did state agents "shanghai" Lozada? This would show Marcos's comrades' jealousy who carried Nobel Laureate Cory Aquino Key. Recent reports that we arrested pro-without crime-can people, too. When government evidence runs a blank, can trust to chance and

Flash back on May 1970. Military and state agents swooped on the Chinese Commercial Press publisher and editor Quirino and Raul Yuyitung were shoved aboard on the Boac C-47 and headed to Taipei.

Like Victor Lazada, Veronica Yuyitung didn't know what happened to her husband. Like kidnappers Commissioner Edmundo Reyes, Baron denied they were kidnapped. Both were beaten during his guide. Quirino was picked up to the Manila Overseas Press Club. Lozada was handled off from the Pinoy Aquino Intercontinental Amorsolo's arrival suite.

A Filipino matron, Quirino Yuyitung says" deported." Blind to historical irony, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol snorted, "They are Lozada's problem-coming down." Then on Lozada's "shanghaiing deals," Reyes' as per a dispatch in Manila's Star Diet should be deported because you're a troublemaker." He has apologized since.

The Yuyitung Kidnapping short-circuited a petition that Johns denied lodged with the Supreme Court, questioning the Boston of Immigration's jurisdiction. Lozada's attorneys therefore decided the best bet could be, just "there is much law in the end of circumstance."

Martial implemented in the Philippines one developed into martial law policy. "A scenario with a remarkable constitutional tradition turned into a gulag of cells houses where members of the elected Forces protect responsibility for men of internal Security," Supreme Justice Fernando Lopez, Chief Justice 1971 and 1981, wrote 737 Filipinos "disappeared" among them were over of Supreme Court Justices Abraham Sanidad and Felix Bautista.

Under Joseph Estrada, Pagcor employee Richard Brinco claimed the Freedom Fighting high-ranker known—and disappeared. The newest instance of abducted publicist Subby Yuson and his driver were encircled in a robbers gone in Cotto. Then PNP chief Lazaro's men Michael Rio Aquino and Dean Mercado shipped cost embroidered to the kidnap murder.

Will kidnapping be part of the legacy of a troubled presidency allowed to "moderate" what the Buddha said is "the worst of greed"?

E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com

Thank God for 'probinsyanong Intsiks'

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

HEROIC APOSTOL LIKES TO BE PUNNY AND reads amusing. But there's something about joining the current administration that makes you stop being funny and start becoming dull and even sniveling. Just when you need it most, it's terribly dull. Still, there are small amounts of comedy of the overly hilarious kind in his congressional report that Lozada's lies made.

Apostol insisted he had described himself as just a "probinsyanong bumbay," Apostol blushed. "He says he is a Chinese from the province. Bopay is yes. I despise the Ilongkis he [Yen ought to be deported. Not in so subtle terms."

The list of names already apologized to the Chinese community after shaming angry province-bum chens. I don't know though why he hasn't apologized as well to probinsyanos, to indeed shown an equally measured response from them. After all, he wasn't quite done when offenders he termed Lozada not be deported for being Chinese or for being provincial.

But that's not the truly funny thing about it. What's so, not which is not me into the spotlight when I saw him on TV answering those charges. Apostol may have a Filipino surname and may be eligible to run for public office, but there is no mistaking Chinese look when you see him. He is the Chinese-est Chinese-looking Filipino I've seen in this town since that a does so more or so. He is the looks more Chinese than Lozada.

As to probinsyano, wasn't he the one who produced one glorious line during the Erap impeachment trial? "Probinsyano ako," but I'll not show but I myself was to be one of the despondent o'Clockers spending Mendiones Republic.

So when Apostol demanded that probinsyanong bumbay who are suppose be deported, well, you treated for his command system mentalities.

But thank God for probinsyanong Intsiks! I got came from Sugar City to attend the 40th anniversary of our high school year but weekend, and never have Intsiks been prouder. Those with roots in the cities fellow Binondo, Escolta to those, those) into those. Finally Binondoan could enter their heads again, they said, which was no small feat since Bicol had for some time room the host of Gen Villafuerte, Edsel Lagman, and Intsi rulers Arroyo. The last, as was rehearsed pounced on, now considers Bicol Police or the Senate of us thundering impediments during Erap's time. "He cannot have a senator not by colors!" Finally Bicol has been vaccinated from the pox—by operation mongolism.

But it's a marriage not just for Binondoan but for probinsyanos in general. And at times before me for them. A great deal has been said about how impaired Manila can be made to serve the visual impairment. A greater deal can be made about how the impairment looks on the impaired Manila at times. That it is conquering is spiritually if not physically. That is by vanquishing it to back to the times probinsyanos are known for simplicity, homely goodness of heart. In a remarkable development, Lozada is no saint. Bicol had for that, too.

Just as well, maybe that Bicol is the Rio it can be the year of the Chinese as well. After the Chinese have seen the face of Donald Dee, most of them, even those who have been living in Manila for years, would be glad to find themselves entering the face of the Lozada. Not once was domestically Lozada has a tin more agreeable one than the Bee. Lozada may have done more for the Chinese community in this country than all the officials of the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce put together. Certainly, he has done wonders for the word "local" which has resulted in many progressive meanings in the past. I know many Chinese mixed being called "local," a term describing that they is the local word, and would rather be referred as to the English word "Chinese" or the local word, "Intsi." Now, that word can easily designate "local" proudly, and defiantly in the same way that people in the provinces can carry the epithet "probinsyano" proudly, and defiantly.

All because a people and fellow Chinese, like she can claw same as Buddha's bedding can and an awake in government on New Year's Day in the face of the law.

Lozada is no saint in the evolutionary and the Zeus, who is arrogant by Filipinos of all shapes and sizes. Who, after being driven to seven-degrees by a seven-ending and deeply troubling question of the triumph of evil, have been given enough good reason to triumph in the end after all. I myself was driven to Bohol by Bush's "I Mean the All Senator" Henry Villaflor's committee dinner why he was so insistent on winning over Thomas Hiow when Hiow was just one man and he, the king, had the support of the Senate and dallas aides, of Church and State alike. "Because he is an honest man," Henry replies. "And an honest man is the most dangerous enemy of all" (or words to that effect. I'm quoting from memory).

Lozada is by no means the Thomas Hiow. He is by his own admission someone who did things he is sure deeply ashamed of. But he is sure also when the time came to give something of himself to country's version of Sir Peter, who answered the call. Now I read the other day about his father's demand that he be an honest man.

Maybe God works in only mysterious ways, or maybe that's just the sublime way of things, mistakes happening when you least expect it. In Tolentino, "God of the Kings" is what they called him of late. He made honest people of them, the last remaining royal descendants of the dearly, in the powerful white aristocracy that put an end to the terrifying, unpopular, and increasingly unsustainable rule of evil Muslim Moro sultans and their cohorts, a dozen monopolizers. Hubby named Pedro. Except that he would be non-aquino, pro-reform, and would have the power to make the thoroughly corrupt Aquino-Cojuangco-Lopez-Ayala oligarchy into non-entities.

Thank God for Hiddins. And thank God for probinsyanong Intsiks.

Whistleblower's own sins

THE SECOND SENATE HEARING ON THE THEN bounty of Rodolfo Noel "Lozada Jr. and the government's efforts to shield him from prosecution was more interesting, and it showed the limits of the senators. At the outset, Administration Secretary Leo Montasa warned the hearing to begin with testimony, apparently to make sure that the alleged "Whistleblower" was not withdrawing from the case. Montasa's presence was emblematic of the regime that Lozada's former protectors. Montasa pointed out that it was Montasa's department in Lozada and her subordinates for protection from unwarranted threats. But Sen. Ping Lacson's questions about the Witness Protection Program made it clear that Montasa was not equipped to be the witness protection manager she formerly was.

But the more interesting part of Montasa's testimony was his shaky recollection of Lozada's emotional testimony. Just before the media and latter to the Senate, could be part of an elaborate political plan to pressure the Arroyo administration and oust President Macapagal-Arroyo. Montasa found it curious that some senators were aware of Lozada's failure to provide financial documents and how the government is holding Kong and his decision to resign from office—things that Montasa said he was not aware of at the time. Montasa did not say whether he had informed Arroyo of these details. He Lacson who had released such details to the public may confide. The inference was that Lacson and the opposition could be manipulating things for the opposition; they are

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cusumano

perceived as prior to that sort of thing. Lawyer Antonio Bautista pointed out that while Lozada said he had not talked to Lacson, he also said that it was his brother who was in touch with the senator. Cayetano, while Lozada said that, Lacson himself, in another part of the testimony, admitted he had been in touch with Lozada on the 27th hour since last December. Montasa's allegation should make people think.

* * *

Various groups led by some religious are now working organized action against the foreign military presence on the heels of the statement of concern on the 27th date. In the project, however, is that the whistleblower's national accusation of corruption and irregularities in his own sphere of influence, and Lozada did not even bother to deny it. He testified that he was the "bagman" for Deputy Ombudsman Orlando Casimiro, that the Philippine Forest Corp. had taken out a 75 million insurance policy with Similar Life without consulting in the figure, and that it had leased out a 99 hectare piece of property in Malaybalay to a company that he (Lozada) controlled. In addition, Lozada testified of a number of instances wherein fees by Gabriel Multimedia Services, which is owned by Lozada's brother, that Multimedia through the project "personality center" and how the company had lent Mercy Arroyo, the President's wife, P2 million. Lozada said that considering that he has attached a project involving billions of pesos, his own

personal indiscretions were pittance. That is bothersome, comparing the billions in the 27th project with the millions involved in his own personal projects is indeed like comparing oranges and apples. But the fact is that in his own area of jurisdiction, the irregularities were very serious, and he can be charged with them for them and not, he could not. Therefore, how his record stacks from a credible witness is a question everyone must! What's even more disturbing is that the religious groups backing him say that they believe he is absolutely. Miraculous people are accustomed.

* * *

There was a heavy session during the first hearing when Lozada was asked why he became so afraid when driven around by men he didn't know to recognize after he arrived from Hong Kong last Feb. 5. Lozada said he was afraid "kuha ma lang" ("they'll just take me"). The reference was to the disappearance of public relations man Bubby Dacer and his driver a few years ago. The kidnap and execution were never solved but former members of elite Presidential Security Group (PSG) officer Dacer Bubby Lacson, former military elements, were believed to have been behind them. There are those who would implicate Lacson himself. The universe hides as pass on Lacson, who remained more lurid, as always, in the light of the unexposed minds.

* * *

Philippine Tourism Authority general manager and chief executive officer Ruben Dean Barbers was requested to have dinner with Filipino residents and resort owners after his name appeared on the PTA end ended in many sections of the mall marking the P180 million PTA shopping spree. A source said Barbers's name was queried as saying that Barbers has no right to put his name on those cards because the funds came from taxpayers. The line is that this is a common practice of government officials. One has only to marvel in any part of the country to see basketball courts, waiting sheds, schoolhouses and other public buildings named after politicians who have given up enough cash funded the projects. This is not right, but to pick on Barbers is quite unfair.

Commitment

I HAVE BEEN ALONE FOR MOST OF MY LIFE. I HAVE NEVER had a girlfriend and my buddies think this is not normal. But since then having a girlfriend, I would rarely like to have a family of my own—unless I found the one.

It goes without saying that these years have known with a girl. Maybe because I have learned that falling in love also means I might fall out of love. And because I believe that love and romance should be shared on more than just good looks; many of our youth culture love with unconditional passion and vigor, and in the midst of this, they are blinded by their emotions and unable to see problems, like emotional perversion, early teen pregnancy, or by their

Young Blood

Rodolfo Dimzon Panadigan

My want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the youth; you can blog send them to... Ed.

rings, dropping out of school, poverty, etc.

Quite often the only reason for indulging in a relationship is lust, you love. People merely "break up" for the pleasures of spending precious moments together or when a realize a "one-night stand." "where is the love, then?

It seems that our generation has lost its morals. Dishonesty and infidelity seem to be common as are divorces and broken homes. People are afraid of making commitments, as if a commitment means being confined to one spot with one person. But I actually do not mind being confined in one spot for as long as it is with a person of true love.

A telling movie quotes no more, but I think that if a movie had a director, it would just do perfect spot as it was.

Today's youth say with each other's emotions when they should be thinking about other matters of much more significance for their future. They pursue too much time and effort in their relationships and neglect their education, work and family life.

I am not being a jerk, but I think that we should focus our energies more on working to improve ourselves so be a better person for our future wife (or husband). Love commitment a deep connection to the other person.

People rarely refer to love letters anymore. Our daily lives now has been reduced to writing text messages to each other. Gone are the days when lovers patiently and painstakingly wrote down what they felt on old-fashioned stationery. Gone are the days of "sweet nothings" that we used to whisper to every single lover that he wrote. Will these days ever happen again? Will there ever be monogamy in this time set of writing love letters? I hope so, because I plan to write some of the letters.

I have noticed that many people fail to love without thinking of the responsibility that comes with it. Sure, they will love. Negate "whatever singing "Kahlagan Ko's Bane" in the background while they kiss on the altar, but what happens after that?

The youth seem unprepared for the challenges of domestic life. But then again, how can they become like mommy pay the bills, send the children to good schools, wash the clothes, do the laundry and cook the food, while maintaining love and harmony in the family. This requires hard work, smart and patience. They say it takes a village to raise a child, but I would say that the family has an even bigger responsibility in doing so.

When it comes to relationships, the real deal should not focus too much on each other but on God. God should be at the center of your relationship, no matter in what stage it is. He is the comforter that makes relationships grow and you should keep Him in your relationship.

Maybe I am old-fashioned and I might not possess the qualities a woman would want in a man. I know I do not fit the stereotype. But one thing is certain: whoever she might be, I will do my very best to be the right man for her. I will fight for her because I love her. I will do all I can to keep the relationship alive and to keep her happy.

For now, there are bound to be problems but we will get over them with patience and with God's help. We will get over them because we will work together to overcome them. We will get over them because we are meant for each other.

I cannot wait to meet her. It is who she is or is how there is impact. They have been married for more than 10 years. They have almost a dozen children all of them professionals. They have an even bigger number of grandchildren, and whenever they have a family reunion, their big house is practically bursting with people. They are a happy family because they care for one another. I admire them and I wish my future family will be just as happy and successful as theirs.

When I asked them about their secret to a successful marriage, Mrs. B told me: "For Godsakes everything else and everything else will follow." I am sure that is exactly what they did and everything seems to just fall in the right place. I am proud just to be acquainted with them. And I wish all families are happy and successful as they have been.

Their experience teaches me that love is for mature people who are profoundly committed to each other.

Rodolfo Dimzon Panadigan, 24, works as an executive assistant in an advertising company.

Such kind people!

At Large

Winnie Monsod-Gutchil

A FRIEND SENT ME THIS TEXT OVER MOBILE the Senate blue ribbon committee was meeting to hear the side of government officials implicated in the earlier testimony of Jun Lozada before the same body.

"Any gutter-selling woman in any market in GMA [Metro] people are so indifferent. They can see everything! At ang hirap-hirap nito ngayon [they are so expensive]! Gusto kong mag-tip sa isang taong, pinanood ko, pero hindi ko ginawa kasi hiyang-hiya ako. Pero 500.000 cash pinagpapatong-patong [cash] sa table!"

Indeed, the generosity and charity of those of Asian has been astounding. It is fascinating because now the currency of sometimes is not only and personality that we would all be living by the light.

* * *

SOON after the false breath, the country saw the mushrooming of non-government organizations—in point 1, 500 of them accredited. In lieu of non-for-profit groups, civic organizations, community groups, people's organizations, social development agencies, foundations, and charitable institutions.

In fact, the Philippines may began to gain international renown for the phenomenal growth of the NGO sector, although some government agencies expressed concern about the "abuses" of the system, such as unfairly being used by "fly-by-night" groups and "bogus NGOs." "If public-sector concern was the use of the NGO system by private companies—which are granted tax concessions for donors—by spurious, fly-by-night and outright criminal groups.

In 1993, the Ramos administration, already under pressure to increase revenues for the national government, set up a task force to reform the tax system, and one of the task force's recommendations was the imposition of a 10 percent sale of donations to NGOs. "If passed," stated a background note on the issue, "it would force tax-exempt to the benefit of deductibility ... and also underscore the tax implications of such donors' acts."

This underscore possibly caused alarm among the

NGO community, especially for foundations and groups dependent on local donations. Bringing their concerns to the BOE and NGO leaders, were then challenged "to create a self-regulatory body to certify non-stock, non-profit organizations for donor institutions status, allowing donors to claim tax deductions and thus encourage contributions under the new tax law."

Six of the country's largest national NGO networks—the Association of Foundations (AF), the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), the Kilusan Ikaduhenmental's Conference for Human Development (KBP), the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), and the National Council for Social Development Foundations (NCSDF)—organized the Philippine Council for NGO Certification, or PCNC, which was later renamed its January 1997 and publicly launched in February 1998.

The PCNC, through a memorandum of agreement with the BOE was authorized to certify NGOs applying for donee institution status under the tax code. Within 15 days, the BOE would then recommend to the BIR the granting of such status to NGOs that stood up to scrutiny.

* * *

All "if-if sense one, the certification process was also envisioned to encourage local donations to NGOs, at a time when revenue was channeled to social development projects, particularly from foreign donors, is drying up.

Another purpose of the PCNC process was to promote professionalism, accountability and transparency within the NGO and non-profit sector in the Philippines. In effect, said a background, the PCNC certification "would mean a

seal of good housekeeping" which hopefully would also help identify NGOs "of good standing" that lending agencies and partners, both local and foreign, may consider in their choice of which organizations to support."

In short, the arrangement between the PCNC and the BOE/Department of Finance sought the best of both worlds, for the government of assurance that only worthwhile NGOs, who were deemed to have adhered to standards of integrity, accountability and transparency, would qualify tax-free donations, and for the NGOs, the right projects, for the NGO community a process of accreditation free of government or political interference, but adhered to accepted standards of professionalism.

The arrangements that worked for several years, and were in fact emulated by emerging civil society organizations around the world, and regarded as a model for NGO-GO partnerships. The PCNC, governed by a board composed of members of the NGO community, with Msgr. Gregorio Precioso, Fred Lecaroz as chair, operates without need of government funding or support. It received seed-up funds from the Ford Foundation, support for its public awareness campaigns and endowment funding from the USAID and a grant from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation for its networks documentation project. It also has a grant from the Asia Foundation for setting up of a public accountability mechanism, the clearing house of assurance evaluation, application for subsidy to applicant NGOs for PCNC certification, and the conduct of training courses on good practices and standards for NGOs operations (mostly funded by application fees and honoraria).

* * *

FROM HERE I must say, my engagement seems extremely workable and beneficial both the government and the NGO community.

However, on the President's desk right now is a draft executive order that would revoke the accreditation system for foreign donations set forth the PCNC. The EO has understandably raised furor among the NGO community, and speculated as to why the EO was necessary in the first place.

More on this in tomorrow's column.

How NOT to read Lozada's testimony

Newsstand

John Nery

IN THE DAY, RUDOLPH NOEL LOZADA JR. chose the most difficult path. We disclosure his sacrifice—however reluctantly he may have made it—if we imagine him saying what we want him to say.

I am not sure, for example, whether we got the story right about the P7B broadband deal's possible impact on a low-cost housing project for the military and police. Under questioning by Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Jr. Lozada's brother, Lozada and the following: "Hindi ko naintindi ang issue ng [I know that the housing project was removed]." To this add, "It's a matter of law [that] in the original list of projects there is a housing project but in the implementation list it was the $1.1 billion package from China, the housing and Negro Tablet Bank [project was running]."

Bumili completed. But to this Lozada did not directly speak. And that some of the resources that funds for the housing project had been diverted to the controversial National Broadband Network. Could through the reports of the Senate hearing on Friday, and the time we get from Lozada in speculation. "Try ko yung yes at nanggulatan [It's probably one of those allowed]," he said.

That is not to say that the housing project for military and police personnel was not a casualty of the unauthorized grand deal severed in June contract the 10M investors—only that Lozada did not have direct knowledge of any such diversion.

The distinction is important, for Lozada's undoubted credibility as a witness lies primarily in his unassuming effort to make distinctions.

Consider Lozada's confirmation of the P200,000 loan Jollee Benjamin Abalos, then vice chairman of the Commission on Elections, reportedly offered Romulo Neri, then the socio-economic planning secretary. Answering a question from Sen. Loren Legarda, Lozada took pains to note that his knowledge of the loan was not based on Neri's testimony, of the offer. (It goes without saying that Neri must have told him, some time after it happened.)

His knowledge was personal, Lozada said. It was based on a personal encounter with Abalos, at the Wack-Wack Golf Club, on the way to the locker room. With his arm around him, an obviously embarrassed Neri, Abalos offered the P200 million for Neri to name the transaction cleared. That is credit-worthy, not speculation.

Or consider the question about what President Macapagal-Arroyo allegedly told Neri after he exposed Rudolf "Jun" Philips' bribe (also Lozada). Lozada declined to answer, even though Neri had told him about that crucial conversation. He had told Neri to be confident, and I wish to report that, Lozada said, is to many words. Chapeau! Just an excellent "banking answer" of the Senate hearings—it is "forthcoming," we all learned and put down, but held to (satisfactory) small vocabulary.

Another that Lozada had categorized, in response to Sen. Manuel Villar's (Nacionalista-Las Piñas) question, as "hearsay" was the offer of Jose Pidal (then Ambassador) that is (the NBN) project, now repackaged as Broad Net) was to be accommodated in the Chinese ODA (official development assistance) package. Lozada said that Pidal had offered one of the reasons Neri allegedly refused to return to the Senate was that continued probing would disturb the potentially politically-lucrative relationship between the Chinese and the Philippine chairman of Pidal. That passage in Neri's letter to Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile (which Pidal denies Arroyo) that is (the NBN) project, now repackaged as Broad Net) was to be accommodated in the Chinese ODA (official development assistance) package. Lozada said that Pidal had offered one of the reasons Neri allegedly refused to return to the Senate was that continued probing would disturb the potentially politically-lucrative relationship between the Chinese and the Philippine chairman of Pidal. That passage in Neri's letter to Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile (which Pidal denies Arroyo) that is (the NBN) project, now repackaged as Broad Net) was to be accommodated in the Chinese ODA (official development assistance) package. Lozada said that Pidal had offered a list of projects already. Arroyo again ordered him to refrain the low-cost housing project and some senior project to accommodate the 27th NBN deal in the ODA loan." But no open intent to interfering arrest evidencing it another.

We still have to hear from Lozada whether he made by his own, or whether he had his own answer it. If here to remove to hide Enrique Razon's offer to make a contribution to the Arroyo campaign is a justifiable stress. Indeed, if I read that brave and lonely, to is essentially saying that his own and still is afraid to testify in full for business reasons—he is not to be applauded. Mr. Razon's. Given, at this point, Lozada's prominent remarks about a hidden evil society, a corrupt opposition, as to borrow an old trilogy of Manila.)

But this much is clear, at least to me. The disgraceful decision to shelve housing projects for the IFF and PAF are not in his Lozada's. Surely someone else can make a distinction between "under-dinner" and "against my will" deserves to be heard on the issue.

* * *

THE AUDACITY OF RISING JACK BENNIES. Sen. Barack Obama does not compare himself to John F. Kennedy. But he does not hesitate to draw the comparison all the time. He has the same rising eloquence, and the capacity to inspire crowds. But does he have the killer instinct? I encourage Senator Obama to read Theodore H. Sorensen in the Sarasota Review in 1960 (which he's name-dropped as of "The Making of the President 1960") reminds us that there was cared inside Kennedy's selves glance.

"Dash," said one of his aides recently, "has the FDR instinct; when he gets into a fight, the instinct is to kill, not to wound. He wants to be President in the worst (damned) way. Being President is a tough business, not a party-train business." And, if the business of becoming President is akin to the business of being President, the more style of his campaign, not the least important, is the perspective Kennedy offers the voters."

* * *

Email: nery@inquirer.com.ph

In The News

Speaker Prospero Nograles

Signs of patronage politics

WHEN I SAW THE PHOTO OF THE PHILippine Tourism Authority's logo with Robert Denis Barbers' name on it (Manila, 2/4/08), I thought it was a protester's way of expressing his (or her) opposition to a personality-driven bureaucracy. I was appalled to read that it was the commission's idea of paying homage to the head of the PTA. Worse, according to the report, Barbers did not see anything wrong with it.

To be raised, the "logo" is another testament to the melancholy mindset that most of our public officials exhibit. Look at the roads, warning decals, public markets, even lamp posts being built throughout the country. Most likely, not a single one of them is without the name (or engraved initial) of a politician or two.

What is wrong with this picture? A lot. It reflects our leaders' inability or unwillingness, or even both, to see institutions. It forces us to look to the person heading a bureaucracy, rather than rely on the institution itself. For solutions. And in the process, schemes of patronage politics develop, agencies, if Execs to look for someone who knows someone in the agency if we want to get something resolved.

No wonder we are hard-pressed to rid ourselves of patronage politics. More than likely too, the answers to pothole of predicaments that plagued us previous projects are either ethical, moral or democratic. But all perhaps, but enough to give the impression "back to square one" a lot of relevance in Philippine politics.

In an ideal world, Congress will pass a law banning names from being "featured," in whatever guise, on government projects.

—RUBEN MARCELLE
Bradley Baden Subdivision, Las Piñas

LETTERS

SSS apologizes to claimant who went through 'calvary'

THIS IS REGARDING THE LETTER ENTITLED "Real Zamora in his letter titled, "Going through a calvary at SSS," (Inquirer, 1/23/08) May we point out the following details for the benefit of our members?

The Social Security System implements guidelines and procedures to facilitate a smooth flow of transactions. Queuing at the SSS front offices is unavoidable because of the large volume of transactions every day. We use an electronic queuing system that flashes a number. It automatically moves to the next number after five calls. Members who miss their turns are advised to approach counter personnel for assistance.

The queuing system at the Branch Service a fully-operational, contrary to Zamora's allegation. According to Elizabeth Reyes, the branch head of SSS Dilimán, only Counter 07 (servicing him) has no access to the system. The offices of the counter uses a wired system to call the number to be attended to. Records and glitches are sometimes unavoidable.

Stores said that Receiving Officers (ROs) make the effort to explain to members the documents needed before claims can be accepted and processed. We advise our members to approach our ROs or go to our information counters for any questions to avoid confusion.

The SSS Member Assistance Center (SSSC) Dilimán apologizes to Zamora and his mother for their difficulty in following up their claim. The supervisor and the officer assigned at Counter 07 have been appropriately reprimanded.

The SSS MAC Dilimán is continuously improving its services by assigning additional employees to the 7 a.m.–4 p.m. shift to accommodate more claimants. A new queuing system will be installed.

—ADELFA DELACION,
assistant service president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

If not obstruction, perhaps arbitrary detention?

THE CHIEF JUSTICE SAYS CLARO THAT taking SEN-ZTE witness Rodolfo Lozada Jr. as police custody did not constitute obstruction of justice because "the Supreme Court ruling said the arrest order of the Senate will only be good within Senate premises." ("CJ: Senate Lozada under its custody," Inquirer, 2/7/08)

Assuming Razon is right (that there was no obstruction of justice), I hope he and the other government officials concerned can also explain why their "taking" of Lozada did not constitute the criminal acts of arbitrary detention and disobedience to summons under Articles 124 and 150 of the Revised Penal Code.

—ERIC BUNAL,
timekeeper17@yahoo.com

East Timor president wounded ...

From page A1

Nobel Peace laureate Ramos-Horta, who **was wounded in the stomach, underwent** surgery at an Australian army hospital in East Timor before being airlifted to Australia for further treatment.

"He has suffered major wounds and he has **had massive blood installations. They are** potentially life-threatening," said a spokesperson for CareFlight International, a medical evacuation service, after Ramos-Horta landed in Australia's northern city of Darwin.

The last bullet was placed on hold his surgeons, including an induced coma and ventilation as he was breathing. That is standard procedure," said Ian Hudson of CareFlight International.

An Australian medical spokesperson said Ramos-Horta was in a **critical but stable** condition.

SERIOUSLY wounded East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta is wheeled into the Royal Darwin Hospital on Monday. AFP

'This gov't won't fall'

Gunmen described the coordinated rebel attacks a well-planned operation intended to "paralyze the government and create instability."

"This government won't fall because of **this," the prime minister said.**

Even so, analysts said the attacks would plunge the already country into much uncertainty. Security analyst Alan Dupont, from Sydney think tank the Lowy Institute, said the shooting would "destabilize East Timor further at a time when they looked to be recovering from the problems of the last 11-18 months."

The flying of 600 mutinous soldiers in 2006 triggered violence that killed 37 people, displaced more than 150,000 others and led to the collapse of the government.

Reinado was one of several Army commanders who joined the 2006 mutiny. While most of the rebel soldiers surprised Ramos-Horta and an unknown number of armed supporters remained in hiding, reverting from the presidents of the last 11-18 months.

Australia announced it would send additional soldiers to the international peacekeeping force it currently leads in the country, bringing total troop levels to around 1,000. The neighboring nation also pledged more police officers in the 1,400 strong UN-led force already there.

Timorese not there tried to standardize the situation and reach out to their friend, partner and neighbor," Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd told a news conference in the capital Canberra. "They have asked for more help, and we are about to provide it."

New Zealand, which has more than 200 soldiers and policemen in East Timor, was putting additional troops on standby. New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff said.

International security forces in East Timor have secured key buildings in Dili and increased patrols in the capital and across the country.

Aid worker Masahiko Horpe told Reuters that the capital appeared calm. "Dili is safe. There are no riots in the capital. But there is heavy patrolling by the police and military police," Horpe said, adding many helicopters were flying over the capital.

Appeal for calm

Gusmao urged the volatile country to **stay calm. "I also appeal to the people not to** spread any false rumors and information," he said.

The attack on Gusmao's car was led by another rebel commander, Gastao Salsinha, according to one of Gusmao's bodyguards, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

"His car was surrounded but Gusmao's car was damaged by bullets," another official said, adding that Gusmao's family had been taken to a military compound for protection.

Major Jim Gamara said two cars carrying rebel soldiers passed Ramos-Horta's house on the outskirts of Dili at around 7 a.m. and began shooting. The guards returned fire.

Dr Lizanne said Reinado, former head of the military police, took part in the attack and was killed.

Reinado was scheduled to go on trial in absentia for his alleged role in several deadly shootings between police and military units during the violence in 2006. He was briefly arrested last he escaped house jail later the same year and had since evaded capture.

Despite the surrounding murder charges filed against Reinado, Ramos-Horta had met on several occasions with the rebel leader since last year in attempts to persuade him to surrender.

Australian-led troops removed rebel fortifications in Dili and around Ramos-Horta's house after Reinado's arrest. Ramos-Horta was elected president in presidential elections held in May 2007. Still, low-level violence has continued in the country of 1 million people since then.

Deposed Prime Minister Xiao Alkatiri has maintained that Ramos-Horta's government was illegitimate, but Alkatiri's political party, Fretilin, decisively condemned Monday's attacks in a statement released to the media. Reports from AP and Reuters

Obama sweeps 5 races ...

From page A1

wins in 22 states.

The campaign, reshuffle—to which Dori Soles Doyle was replaced by longtime Clinton aide Maggie Williams—came ahead of the Potomac primaries that Clinton needs to widen her delegate lead in a deadlocked race that could last until the party's national convention in August.

In the latest overall totals in The Associated Press count, Clinton has 1,196 delegates to 1,105 for Obama. The totals include superdelegates, which are party leaders not chosen at primaries or caucuses, free to change their minds. A total of 2,025 delegates is required to win the Democratic nomination.

In Maine, with 95 percent of the participating precincts reporting, Obama led with 59 percent of the vote, to 41 percent for Clinton. Obama won 15 of Maine's delegates to the national convention, and Clinton won nine.

Grammy for Obama

Obama, who seeks to be America's first black president, won Grammy after his weekend **winning sweep.** He even won a Grammy on Sunday for his audio version of his book "The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts On Reclaiming The American **Dream," beating former Pres**idents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter in the love spoken word album category.

"I have the ability to bring people together," Obama said. "Because of that, he said, "I think I've been able to govern more effectively," in a reference that highlighted a shift in both his and Clinton's campaign aimed at addressing the challenge the presumptive Republican nominee would pose to the Democratic general election.

Earlier Sunday, Obama campaigned in Virginia where he said that Clinton was "a capable person" and "can improvement" over Republican President George W. Bush. But the black candidate added that the public sees the New York senator as part of a divisive political era that the country is weary of.

Democrat, Republican Party chair in Washington state, said Sunday evening that McCain's lead had narrowed, but only slightly with just more than 93 percent of results in.

"The vote count continue now," Dorr said. "These have **hands of results continue** when I said last night. It's a close race, but it's close for. McCain will win The Washington state **precinct caucuses."**

Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor, has vowed to stay in the race until a candidate earns the delegates needed to win the nomination. He has dismissed as "total nonsense" suggestions that he quit the race as the party could maximize its resources for the November election.

McCain appeared likely to refocus on Tuesday to the next Republican contests. The Minnesota House polls showed the 2008 arena senator leading Huckabee by nearly 30 percentage point **margins in both Virginia and** the District of Columbia. Republicans will also compete in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday.

Former President Bill Clinton, who visited black churches in Maryland and Washington, D.C., in effort to rev into Obama's huge lead among black voters, said on Sunday he chooses between his wife and Obama for the Democratic nomination was a God-given "dilemma." AP

Church group calls on people to pray for truth

From page A1

Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, said the PPCRV was mobilizing its diocesan and provincial chapters to galvanize Filipinos into joining the prayer campaign and to protect the votes by backing the various issues confronting the country.

In a parallel effort, former President Corazon Aquino has organized a special Mass for vehicle-blessed Rizalista Maf "Dat" Lozada Jr. and his family on Saturday, Feb. 16, at La Salle Green Hills.

Lozada is a crucial witness in the Senate investigation of the alleged corrupted $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal.

Aquino, who visited Lozada last weekend, spent yesterday watching the televised Senate hearings.

"Ms Aquino is standing by him for his testimony" said her spokesperson, Deedee Siytangco.

Siytangco said Saturday's Mass would "not be political."

The IPCRV call for prayers was in response to a statement the other day from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) calling for "communal action" in the search for the truth.

"This is to engage the public to think about the issues and to come up with a positive action," the Villacastin statement.

She said the IPCRV wanted to involve people at the parochial level in the search for the truth.

3 o'clock habit

This would include encouraging parishioners to pray and reflect on the circumstances in the country at the 3 o'clock hour every day and does continue group discussions.

"We strongly suggest that it be done at the Divine Mercy hour at 3 p.m.," she said.

The objective is for people to "pray for the ... country's search for truth," De Villa said.

But Auxiliar Secretary Saul Gonzales said the people were sick of street protests and they prefer to "organize for them was chosen by the five wants bodies joining antigovernment protests.

"I think the people are tired of that," he said.

State ready vs destabilizers

But even if there would be fresh destabilization attempts, Gonzales said the government was ready to defend itself.

Asked what he thought of the CBCP statement praising Lozada and businessman Joey de Venecia for their testimony in the Senate, Gonzales said: "You cannot stop the Church from saying what they want to say, just as we can't stop them from harboring fugitives."

Gonzales also called against the text messages that circulated on Friday warning people against going to malls and the LRT Light Rail Transit) stations in Manila because these places would be bombed in different attacks away from the Senate probe.

He said the spreading of such rumors might could be considered economic sabotage and those who spread them...whom he suspected belonged to opposition—thought people would be naive enough to believe them.

"The people who are trying to spread fear in people should have their heads examined," Gonzales said.

Proper forum is the courts

As far as Malacañang is concerned, the proper forum to find out the truth about alleged anomalies in the now-scrapped NBN project are the courts and not the Senate, Gonzales said.

Gonzales also yesterday called for unity, cooperation, a consideration of all the facts and due regard for what will serve the common good in the long term," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

In view of this, Bunye said it was the courts and "not an emotionally charged forum" which should be the "proper venue for the determination of truth and justice."

Speaking to reporters, Bunye said the CBCP **did not define what is meant by "communal** action" but he did not think the bishops meant it the way some interpreted it—as a call for an uprising against the Arroyo administration.

'Time to act'

Bunye said that he interpreted the CBCP statement as a call for "collective action for the search for truth and obtaining justice."

Bunye expressed confidence that the people of Lozada would not result to the precipitating to the streets.

"We've said that the people are tired of destabilization," he said.

He calls for President Macapagal-Arroyo to resign, Bunye said Mr Arroyo's mandate was "up to 2010."

In a statement, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz echoed the CBCP call, saying "the time has come for the people to join Lozada and others] in spirit and in truth, in action for integrity and justice."

"This is communal action...Lolos na sila. Ilbo na tayo [They have gone overboard. Let us move on]," Cruz said.

Up to the people

Cruz said that "communal action" was up to the people, who collectively had the power to establish a democratic then government."

He said the CBCP could not itself or urge a government because it was not the sovereign people.

Cruz said it was the thousands of Filipinos that flocked to the streets to call for change that made people power possible in 1986 and 1991.

Similarly, it was the people who decided to throw their support behind Estrada, he said.

In Bacolod City, Bishop Vicente Navarra said the lay people should now take up the gauntlet and initiate moves to arouse the conscience of the public to make the government accountable and responsible to all.

"The Church does not advocate violence but those should be concerned efforts to promote the culprits to (bring) out the truth," he said.

No people power pot

Fr. Jose Dizon, convenor of Initiative Philippines, a movement for the advancement of Church's social justice agenda, said that "big command action" were not expected within the next few days.

He said Church-based groups and others still wanted to get a complete picture of what was behind the NBN deal.

Former Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr., whom Lozada said had demanded $130 million to commission from the NBN deal, expressed frustration at the CBCP support for Lozada, saying the bishops were "blinded" by the witness' allegations.

"Maybe they don't know the whole truth. Let's leave it to them... Let's give them the benefit of the doubt," he said. With reports from Pia Zamora, Christine O. Avendaño, Norman Bordadora and Kristine L. Alave and Carlo P. Garcia, Inquirer Visayas

FOOD PROCESSING MACHINES ON STOCK

DIRECT FACTORY PRICE

TAIWAN MACHINERY TRADE CENTER

DEALERS ARE WELCOME

Across the NATION

Execs clueless on 44 missing lampposts

By Idonis R. Bulanbot
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—WHERE HAVE THE 44 DECORATIVE LAMPposts gone? Authorities don't have any clue.

The lampposts, worth P9.858 million, were among those allegedly overpriced and installed here and in the cities of Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu during the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit in December 2006.

Mandaue-based businessmen Cristobal Saavedra exposed the massive overpricing of 1,360 decorative lampposts supplied by Mitsubi Commercial and Equipment Corp. and Joseph Construction.

The lampposts were priced at P81,000 to P300,000 each, according to the two firms, but an Ombudsman fact-finding committee learned that a unit was worth only P13,750 at the most. Nineteen government officials are facing administrative and graft charges for the lighting project that cost the government P365.8 million.

On March 19, 2007, the Ombudsman suspended for six months Mandaue Mayor Thadeo Ouano, Lapu-Lapu Mayor Arturo Radaza, eight of their subordinates and nine top officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways for their alleged involvement in the overpricing.

Then Genuine Opposition reelectionist candidate Sen. Rodolfo Lacson claimed the suspended officials were being used as scapegoats, and that the overprice of the lampposts might have been contributed to the administration clan's election kitty.

Only the renegade Marks that serve as foundation of the 44 lampposts remain along the road leading to the old Mandaue-Mactan bridge, Red Rhino, senedene graft investigator and head of the Ombudsman-Visayas fact-finding team said on Monday.

Both the DPWH and the Mandaue City government denied having knowledge of the whereabouts of the lamps.

The bypass road is still British but was told that to office on his go to Osmeña Boulevard was severely closed and that calls were to be connected through the cell phone of a Fabrick official. He could not be reached, however.

On Monday, Deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas Pelagio Apostol ordered the fact-finding team to conduct an inventory since the removal of the lampposts had no clearance from the anti-graft office.

"There's no erasure from the committee to remove the lampposts or is the DPWH or local government unit. The lampposts is evidence. Unsupported. They should not remove the lampposts," Apostol said.

Blanco said he would contact the officials of Mandaue and the DPWH to find out who ordered the removal of the lampposts.

Bayani Mangaba, DPWH regional legal officer, said he would investigate the incident since there was no removal order given to Fabrick.

Mangaba echoed Apostol's view that the removal of the lampposts had legal consequence since the case was pending before the anti-graft office.

Francisco Sarok, lawyer of Mandaue Mayor Jonas Cortes, said he was unaware of the missing lampposts. He said the city government, as it had earlier announced, would not accept the lampposts until the case with the Ombudsman had been resolved.

"There's no reason for the mayor, the city could not have ordered the removal of the lampposts because it had no basis," he said.

"In normal processes and process, we would be informed. In this case, we were not aware about it until we've informed that they were already gone. That should be looked into," Arce said.

The antigraft office is also looking into allegations that the surveillance cameras installed in the three cities were overpriced.

The DPWH bought 42 surveillance cameras that were installed along the Asean ceremonial routes. At its P80 million price tag, it seems that each of the 42 cameras cost the government P1.14 million.

Separately, the losing bidder in the surveillance camera project, was also the orlando Mercure in the alleged scam.

The businessman also filed a plunder case against Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia, eight other provincial government officials, and the contractor for the alleged overpricing of the Cebu International Convention Center, where the Asean summit was held. With Inquirer Research

TRANS ORIENT TRUCKS & HEAVY EQUIPMENT

INQUIRER

Panlilio tightens quarry collection

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—PAMPANGA Gov. Eddie Panlilio has tightened the collection system on quarry revenues through the use of monitoring tickets that are said to be difficult to fake.

Starting next month, the use of the monitoring tickets begin on Friday as revenues hit P144.49 million.

The amount is 95.59 million short of P150.48 million, the biggest income that the state-owned Natural Resources Development Corp. drove for the provincial government in 1999, according to Wilfredo Cunanan, chief of the operations unit of the quarry concessions formed by Panlilio.

The monitoring tickets are an "additional safeguard in the proper payment" of the P150-an and P150-administrative fee per truckload of sand, Cunanan said in a statement.

He said these are issued only to legitimate quarry operators after they have obtained official receipts for payments of tax and fee at the provincial treasurer's office, the capitol's first line of monitoring.

Concern

Cunanan said the monitoring tickets have been introduced to address the concerns of truckers earlier Gatan about the practice of issuing up the official receipts whenever loaders showed those in checkpoints as proof of payments of tax and fee.

The practice began in 1999 during the first term of then Gov. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, who is now a senator.

Although the issuing of official receipt is allowed, we take the concerns of the truck operators seriously. We continue to assure him that no quarry checkers are honest and are doing their best to serve the interests of the provincial government," Cunanan said.

When loaders go through the check point, they would still need to present the official receipts instead of issuing them, the checkers would instead be given a copy of one of the five identical stubs in the monitoring ticket.

A sample from Cunanan showed that a stub is reserved for the operator and another for the hauler. The remaining three stubs are to be submitted to any of the capitol's 32 checkpoints.

Each stub bears the logo of the provincial capitol and carries two-bar codes.

The stubs contained computer-generated entries for the pass number, name of the operator, quarry site, date and time of payment of receipts, and official receipt number.

Checkers will write on the stub the information on the truck's license plate number and the date when the ticket was used, he said.

"All the collected stubs will be reconciled through a bar code reading machines secured at the provincial treasurer's office," Cunanan said.

Before

Under Panlilio, the capitol had filed charges against a man caught selling false receipts in Mexico town in July last year. The committee has arrested and fined at least 12 people who hauled sand and soil without securing permits and payments.

Panlilio said the monitoring tickets are among the reforms to be enforced to ensure that the government benefits from the Pinatubo's sand "badly get into the public treasury to fund social services."

In an interview, Cunanan said the implementation of a new quarry law, Ordinance No. 176, would have to wait until the Department of Finance, Commission on Audit and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) issue their comments on the provisions of that law.

Panlilio has asked the Department of Justice to declare Ordinance No. 176 unconstitutional and illegal over alleged violations of two existing laws and the Local Government Code.

It was proposed by the Pampanga Mayors' League in August and approved by the provincial board in September last year.

Fenette Orejola, Inquirer Central Luzon

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Cavite workers center gets peace award in South Korea

THE WORKERS ASSISTANCE CENTER, A militant group advocating the protection of laborers' rights, has been awarded the 2008 Justice and Peace Award by the Tji Hak-soon Justice and Peace Foundation (THSJPF) based in South Korea.

"The award is a fitting tribute to the more than 12 years of WAC's empowering advocacy for the rights and welfare of the Philippine working class," Bishop Ephraim G. Fajardo of the Philippine Independent Church and WAC chair, said in a press statement sent to the Inquirer.

Fajardo said the principles practiced by WAC by the benefit of thousands of workers, who exploited, manipulated, harassed and exposed to various forms of human rights violations are worthy of the prestigious award given by the foundation.

Workers' defense

WAC was established in 1995 in Imusto, Cavite to organize, educate and defend the workers against all forms of human and labor rights violations for the realization of their socioeconomic well-being.

The center has offices in Cavite and Batangas provinces.

It is the 11th Justice and Peace awardee of the Korean Foundation since it was founded in 1997.

The award consists of $10,000 and a medal which will be formally presented to WAC in a ceremony to be held in Seoul, South Korea on March 10.

Fr. Jose Dizon, WAC executive director, said accept the award on behalf of the center.

"The WAC is not only honored by the award. It is also deeply inspired by this kind of recognition coming from a Korean foundation whose own compatriots investing in the Cavite economic zones are the biggest number of cases handled by WAC in terms of labor rights violations," said Pelagio.

He said that with the award, former WAC chairperson Bishop Alberto Ramento, who was murdered in 2006 in Tarlac City "has already been provided a share of his justice even not from the rule of law but by way of recognition for what he had fought and died for as one of the staunchest advocates of the workers rights."

Impressed

Msgr. Kim Seong-Gerg, THSJPF chair, in his letter to WAC on Jan. 26, said: "We were very impressed by your organization that has been continuously fighting for the rights and welfare of [the] laborers, no matter what hardships your organization has undergone."

The award is presented annually by the THSJPF to individuals and organizations who fight for justice, peace, and human rights even in the face of an oppressive system and in the grave risk of their lives.

It was set up to honor the late Bishop Daniel Tji Hak-soon, a Korean activist for human rights movements in Korea Catholic Church and who had campaigned for justice and peace in Korea since the 1970s and died in 1993. Emilio T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

■ PAGSANJAN CITY

6 wounded in blast at back of plaza

SIX PEOPLE were wounded when a bomb exploded at a barangay hall in Pagsanjan at the back of the Rizal Park on City plaza at around 8 p.m. on Tuesday.

Senior Supt. Virgilio Ramos said police were still trying to identify the culprit behind the blast but ruled out hatred to a grenade throwing incident at a police checkpoint in Barangay Cavinitan last week.

The wounded were brought to the Divine Savior in Lucban Municipal Hospital.

Jhaff R. Bond, Inquirer Mindanao

■ LUCBAN, NUEVA ECIJA

Execs want new image for Lupao

SEVERAL executives of Lupao Nueva Ecija is lookening for "something more positive" than the one it has earned for 15 years: The "Lupao Massacre."

On Feb. 10, 1987, 17 people were found dead after soldiers battled Alex Pasqual's army rebels in Lupao. 177 Kilometers north of Manila and was at the peaceful town of Nueva Ecija.

Mayor Richard Mamaril said the municipal government would help the rebels develop its economy recovering projects.

Jonathan Pasion, Inquirer Central Luzon

■ GENERAL SANTOS CITY

Judge rejects writ of amparo

A COURT trashed a petition for writ of amparo filed by militants in General Santos City to secure the release of a suspected communist guerrilla held in military custody.

The petition by Karapatan and the Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao (UPLM) was aimed at forcing the military into releasing Ruberto Pumay, who was arrested and detained by a soldier in Norala-ter and was in custody of the hospital.

But Shariffon Judge Dimar Bent said in his Feb. 5 ruling with the petitioners' lawyers that he could not accept the petition and release Pumay because the suspect was under going treatment.

Bent said that the petitioners can right place if included a claimant for P100,000 in damages which the judge said, was a serious technical flaw. The lawyers had agreed to withdraw the petition.

Jaydee C. Cario, Inquirer Mindanao

■ BUKIDNON CITY

Wayward truck rams house; 1 killed

TWELVE persons sustained minor injuries when a speeding cargo truck rammed into a house in Barangay Tanaa, Poona Piagapo, 7 kilometers from Buenos City, on Sunday.

The truck, owned by truckers-merchants Saturnino, plowed into the house of Isaac Arbolito, 40, at 8:30 p.m. Arbolito's wife Jessy, 30, son Oscar Jr., 12, and a neighbor Dominador Cabanlit, 50, were injured there, some declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

Three other family members and two neighbors were pinned down by the truck but escaped unhurt.

Felipe Dalisay, Inquirer Mindanao

■ ILOILO CITY

Dolphin saved in Boracay

RESCUERS Land boss title of Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan, last week helped save a bad mother dolphin and its child were the objects.

The whale was first seen at around 2:30 p.m. near Sitio Balagugot this village of Boracay at the opposite side of White Beach.

Rosario Jetal, owner of Jetset Diving Center in Boracay and her staff, along with some surfing and kite boarding enthusiasts, brought the whale to the open sea but it kept coming back to shore.

Around 5 p.m., the people moved the animal to the beach on the other side of the island where another was still attached to a speedboat. It was estimated to have deep waters of around 5-10 p.m., said Jetal.

Rosalie P. Burgos Jr., Inquirer Visayas

KMP alarmed over abductions in C. Luzon

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Leaders of the Kilusang Mayo Uno and the Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI) are alarmed over the abduction of leaders of farmers' groups in Central Luzon.

The latest victim has been identified as Nardo Serrano, a leader of the Central Luzon Farmers Association (CLAN) in Pandakaki-an, Pampanga, according to BMP Chair Rafael Mariano and Aljoanna ng May, Inbulad at Gitnang Luzon Dane Joseph Canlas in a joint statement.

Serrano, they said, was abducted by troops from the 79th Infantry Battalion, cooperated the Special Citizen Armed Peace Development Unit Active Auxiliary (SCAA), in his house in Barangay Pinkabilad at 9 a.m. on Feb. 6.

"Barangay officials and other witnessed and followed the abduction. Bi Nardo was taken to the military detachment at Macapagal Village in Barangay San Ramon in the same town. When the barangay officials tried to retrieve him, the soldiers refused and were even barred by Bi Nardo," Mariano said.

An inquiry center in the village and authority officials in the area offered Serrano P60,000 if he surrendered.

Soldiers also brought a sack of rice to his family. He refused to surrender, saying he never joined the New People's Army, the source said.

Brig. Gen. Rommel Gomez, chief of the 703rd Infantry Brigade, has ordered his men to check the incident.

Canlas said Francis Gerpez, the Old BMP leader in the region who was abducted this month, has been released by his captors on the night of Feb. 8. They brought him back to his house in Barangay Dolores, Nueva City of Malolos, Cavite Province.

Gerpez, 41, vice chair of the AMGL in Nueva Ecija, "bore signs of torture," Canlas said.

Gerpez was taken from his house at 2 a.m. on Feb. 8 by four armed men who identified themselves as Bow Peralta's army rebels. He reportedly was blindfolded and forced into a vehicle, according to his wife, Cecilia.

Canlas said Francis Gerpez, the Old BMP leader in the region who was abducted this month, has been released by his captors on the night of Feb. 8. They brought him back to his house in Barangay Dolores, Nueva City of Malolos, Cavite Province.

Gerpez, 41, vice chair of the AMGL in Nueva Ecija, "bore signs of torture," Canlas said.

Gerpez was taken from his house at 2 a.m. on Feb. 8 by four armed men who identified themselves as Bow Peralta's army rebels. His relatives, who witnessed the abduction, suspected that the armed men belonged to the 703rd Bde.

"The soldiers threatened him and his family not to talk about the abduction and to go to the police to say that he was okay," Canlas said.

Maj. Gen. Jaime Gomez, chief of the 7th Infantry Division, promised to look into Gerpez's abduction.

There has been a surge in extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances in Central Luzon since October last year.

The last known case of disappearance involved Jayke Cabiltag, 20, an organizer of the Kilusang para sa Pambansang Demokrasya. He was last seen in Gaupan, Pampanga, on Oct. 24, 2007.

The human rights group Karapatan documented more than 120 cases of murder and 66 cases of disappearances in Central Luzon, starting January 2001. Those peaked during the third of May, Gen. Arroyo in Bulacan by an 7th Infantry Division commander from September 2005 to September 2006.

In previous interviews, however, Peliposan had denied responsibility or orchestrating these incidents.

Seven Aeta leaders in Pampanga ended in July 2007 and reported to religious leaders and human rights advocates since the torture and harassment they received from the military.

RESIDENTS of Sto. Tomas, Pangasinan, grill 80 kilos each of corn cobs along a 3-km table during the town's first Corn Festival. The activity was an attempt to break the Bukidnon town for the largest barbecue holding a room in Manila.

Town hopeful to beat barbecue record set by Mexico

STO. TOMAS, PANGASINAN—Authorities in Mexico's Agbaja in Sto. Tomas (Guadalajara, Mexico, Long Live, Sto. Tomas)!

Thus roasted residents of this farming town on Sunday as they while feeding corn on grills along an almost 3-kilometer stretch.

Officials hoped the feat would be recognized by the Guinness World Records to have the record set in 2006 by Mexicanville, Mexico, for its 2,200-kilometer Mexican delighted Dagupan City's 1,807-foot-long (milkfish) barbecue record set in 2005 during its Bangus Festival.

"By event culminated this Tomas' 100th anniversary celebration. A total of 1,019 grills, each measuring 3.4 meters [feet] long, were lined along the highway through Barangay Agbaja to the boundaries of Barangay Poblacion East proper and barangay Poblacion West proper and burned days before the event.

HOMETOWN *Snapshot*

The documentation team said people using 39 pails (total length: 132.6) in the 46 ha boundaries did not grill over due to lack of time. Absent a helicopter, it failed to complete its task as darkness fell.

"I am happy that our town was able to organize such a big event because of the cooperation of everyone," said Mayor Victor Sillo.

Rep. Mamen Espinosa, the festival guest, called the event "a fitting tribute" to the town's anniversary.

Vice Mayor Nicolas Allira said the town clinched from Bukidnon to come up. Rolando Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Only local gov't execs have IDs, says Sulu mayor

PATIKUL, SULU—CONTRARY TO THE military's claim, the fortified expressed Provincial Executive has not been fully implemented here.

Mayor Hadjee Hayudini said only local officials like him, the vice mayor, councilors and the 30 village chairs have worked of the ID system.

Hayudini and their wives still going around the municipality to monitor residents in response to the 3rd Marine Brigade headquarters in the village of Lung Sum, or at the Task Force Comet headquarters in the village of Pan-ian in Jolo town.

Col. Nestoly Evarna, 3rd Marine Brigade commander, earlier said members of the Patikul residents have worked of the system.

May. Gen. Romeo Rabael, Task Force Comet chief, even bragged about the operations of residents here, saying a great majority supports the idea and many want to have an ID."

Patikul has about 54,500 residents based on the 2000 National Census.

Earlier, former Gov.Sid Mutor Jr. second Sulum told the Inquirer that they were against the ID system as it would categorize residents until had so good merely to own a piece of card.

"Hayudini lang si, mamma lang ma-ing nawa, mahuri lang ayo. Akhirap mamang kalalawa ang pagbalan ng mang ma-akhi lang si isang pirasong papel," Mutor said.

Hayudini said the military had imposed a different system before. He said it was called "safe resident pass," which gave residents the right to go to their farms and harvest their crops.

But Lawyer Jose Manuel Mamaying, director of the Commission of Human Rights for Western Mindanao, said he was concerned over the determination of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to impose the localized ID system in Sulu.

Mamaying said the ID system is unlawful.

"It's not the role of the AFP to impose such practice," he said.

"There is an opposite of forced disappearances as people who will not submit to be such system will be considered as rebels," he added. Arlie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

Temperature drops in Benguet; spots of frost noted

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—WHENEVER THE temperature drops at dawn at this time of the year, farmers in Barangay Pacso in this town and Barangay Shedantem in Olympus town would direct water sip-soaked straw from blanketing their vegetable farms.

The last few days were no exception.

The temperature went down to its lowest reading but the farmers said only spots of frost occurred.

Shedantem and Pacso are the highest elevation vegetable-producing villages in the province.

Ambl. Mayor Conception Bakas and Municipal barangay chair Homer Tabaldan said the location of the areas are about 7,400 meters above sea level, the altitude of the country's highest point of the Philippine highway system at Kilometer 54 in Barangay Cadaclan in Sicdi.

Tight watch

"The farmers are there always to beat attack particularly when there is prolonged cold weather and no wind or drizzle in the previous days," Tabaldan said.

Tabaldan said the farmers had left farmers at night watch over the possibility of frost.

He said from Feb. 3 to 10, the thermometer placed at the town's meteorological station in Pacso recorded the temperature reading of between 6 and 10 degrees Celsius.

The worst was last Sunday, Bakas said, when the temperature dropped to 6 degrees Celsius.

On Monday, Bakas said there were spots of frost just like the past few days.

Tabaldan said the same thing happened in Barangay Shedantem. Spots of frost were also seen on some vegetable gardens in the village.

Tabaldan said Barangay Shedantem's cabbage is one of vegetable farms were hit by the frost.

Isolated

"The frost was isolated. There is no reason we call for a declaration of calamity. We pray through God that it will not continue until the warm days come," Bakas said.

Meanwhile, Tabaldan said, has more than 1,000 households cultivating more than 6,000 hectares of farm lands.

In Baguio City, Danny Galati, weather specialist of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), said the temperature has been dropping since last week.

Galati said temperature readings would continue to drop because of the cold front sweeping Northern Luzon.

The temperatures in Baguio on Monday had 11.4 degrees Celsius, Puerto Princesa City, 23.2 degrees Celsius. The coldest temperature recorded in 2007 was 9 degree Celsius, which happened on Jan. 29.

Galati said the daily minimum temperature in the last five days in Baguio were 13.6 degrees Celsius, Feb. 6; 12.4 degrees, Feb. 7; 11.4 degrees, Feb. 8; 11.4 degrees, Feb. 9; and 11.8 degrees, Feb. 10. Rolando Sotelo-Fuertes with a report from Rodolfi Mendiz, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Wild birds find sanctuary inside power plant

By Dalin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

PAGBILAO, QUEZON—MIGRATORY and other endangered birds can find refuge in Mt. Cristobal, home to a coal-fired power plant operated by environmentalists as highly unlikely.

The plant else is "a natural bird paradise" paradise," said Gregg Bernardez, external affairs head of Team Energy Philippines Corporation (TEC), which owns the 735-megawatt facility in the coastal village of Barangay Pinagbuhatan here.

In less 431 Philippine naturalists Oscar Guevarra, also called Philippine duck, peregrine falcon, great egret, spotted dove, robin-breasted wood swallow and other migratory birds were identified and listed in the Asian Waterbird Census last month, Bernardez said.

The census was undertaken by the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines (WBCP) during a bird-watching activity led by its president, Michael Lu, and talli-ed Concepcion.

The high number of ducks in the subspecies indicates that the power plant continues to enjoy sound environmental practices," Lu said in the statement to confirming Bernardez's report.

In its last survey sometime in 2006, Lu said around 800 Philippine mallards were found. The WBCP has been conducting bird-watching expeditions in the plant premises since 2004.

With less than 13,000 of the species left, the Philippine mallard is listed as "vulnerable" by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the world's largest conservation network based in Switzerland.

The ducks inhabit the ponds which serve as receptacles for ash coming from burnt coal. Wood lumps are made from clay and synthetic materials.

"It has provided a second haven for the various bird species often sighted in the plant grounds. The birds find security inside the plant premises," Bernardez said.

Todd Energy Philippines also maintains a mangrove replacement farm in another part of Pagbilao, which Lu described as "another revelation."

The bird kinds of habitat there, Lu said, are home to a high diversity of birds, which include listed species such as the Philippine Mallards and the Philippine Teneal, as well as common species such as Philippine duck and Pacific Plover," he said.

The WBCP official, however, was disappointed with the conservation bird-hunting activities in the vicinity.

DUCKS find safe haven inside the power plant in Pagbilao, Quezon.

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Aplus METRO
Editor Dexter G. Dipanpol

DID YOU KNOW

On Feb. 5, 1969, convicted rapist Leo Echegaray became the first person to be legally executed via lethal injection in the Philippines. The house painter was executed inside the Sta. Ritta Prison death chamber in Muntinlupa for raping his 10-year-old daughter in 1994.

Cyrill C. Arevalo/Inq. Research

Rodriguez town mayor suspended

By Kristine L. Alave, DJ Yap and Julie M. Aurelio

THE RIZAL PROVINCIAL BOARD yesterday effected a 60-day preventive suspension order against Rodriguez town Mayor Bella Castejon based on a complaint filed last year by the Metropolitan Manila Development Agency and garbage haulers.

The MMDA and garbage contractors filed the complaint after Castejon approved an increase in fees for the use of the 14-hectare landfill which is being managed by his government.

From the previous P450 per truck, the tipping fees for the use of the dumpsite was hiked to between P800 and P1,000. The increase took effect last August.

In a two-page order to Sangguniang Panlalawigan member Ehnjelic Yaniz-ano III, the provincial board said it was suspending Castejon to ensure the "integrity" of the documents and public records in his office.

"Respondent's witness (hereby) for competent authority is an offense to grave abuse in exercise his preventive suspension from office," Tanjuatco said.

According to the provincial government, Castejon exhausted while by executive denied by the Justice department which said that the town breached its taxing powers when it increased these fees last year.

Harassment

Castejon, for his part, said the provincial order suspending him was a form of "harassment." He added that he would appeal the ruling but would still report for work today.

Castejon's suspension took effect on the same day he implemented what he called the "pay as you discharge" scheme.

In a truck, garbage trucks from Metro Manila were turned away from the landfill in Rodriguez after their drivers failed to pay on the spot the levies and hearing fees of up to P1,000 being charged per truck.

The MMDA said it had to oversee the trucks to its alternative dumping grounds in San Pedro, Laguna and Clark, Pampanga.

"We're very tired and reports that as of this morning, the garbage trucks are being refused entry in Rodriguez unless they pay the fees," MMDA General Manager Robert Sarmiento revealed.

He added that he did not expect the new payment policy to significantly affect garbage collection and disposal in the metropolis.

But at the same time, Sarmiento said "there would be a delay in collection during the adjustment period" although he could not say how long this would be.

Previously, the levies and hearing fees were remitted to the Rodriguez government months after the garbage trucks had dumped their contents in the landfill with Metro Manila local governments entering their payments through the MMDA.

Castejon earlier said the fees were supposed to cover "social, health and other adverse costs for being the dumping ground for Metro Manila's solid waste."

According to Sarmiento, the garbage trucks could still use the sanitary landfills in places like Pier 18, Navotas City and Norzagaray, the use of which is exclusive to Quezon City.

Affected cities

The new payment scheme being implemented by the Rodriguez town government is expected to affect the cities of Makati, Pasig, Taguig and the town of Pateros which rely on the MMDA to dispose of their garbage.

Yesterday only 28 of Makati City's 127 garbage trucks were able to dispose of their cargo in the resident's landfill in San Pedro, Laguna where they had to be screened after Rodriguez officials refused them entry for failing to pay the levies and hearing fees.

Danilo Villar, the chief of the city's Department of Environmental Services, said problems arising from the new policy would likely begin today, although he could not specify the extent of possible delays in garbage collection, or its impact.

According to Villar, it was the responsibility of the MMDA to find alternative dumping grounds for Metro Manila's trash.

Pasay Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad, meanwhile, said he was leaving it to the MMDA to find a solution to the problem.

"The delineation of duty is clear. We collect the garbage and the MMDA takes care of the dump. As far as we are concerned, we pay the MMDA to do just that," Trinidad said in an interview.

Pateros Mayor Aimee Medina, meanwhile, said the town has an alternative dump in case more problems crop up due to the Rodriguez government's "pay as you discharge" scheme.

For his part, Pasig City Mayor Robert Eusebio urged the MMDA to negotiate with the Rodriguez government so as to stop the MMDA crisis and town using the landfill from the new payment scheme.

February 13 declared a special nonworking holiday in Parañaque

By Julie M. Aurelio

FEB. 13—SUT FEB. 14, VALENTINE'S Day—will be a red letter day in Parañaque City which will be marking its 11th city-hood anniversary on that day.

Mayor Florencio Bernabe Jr. yesterday announced that there would be no work in government and private offices and classes in private and public schools in the city on Feb. 13, which has been declared "Parañaque Day."

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, in behalf of President Macapagal-Arroyo, earlier signed Proclamation No. 1432 which declared Feb. 13 a special nonworking holiday in the city.

Grateful

"I am grateful to our President for declaring Parañaque (for) a special nonworking holiday giving us an opportunity to celebrate our city-hood and take such (moved) time off," Bernabe said.

In celebration of the event, a citywide job fair will be held on Feb. 11 at the parking lot of City Hall.

"On the occasion of our ninth city-hood anniversary I will continue to implement programs and policies that will take Parañaque City on the path of progress," Bernabe said.

New projects

Among the projects being implemented by the city government that are due to be completed this year are the city police headquarters and the new city central fire station.

Bernabe added that in 2007, a total of 13,181 businesses were registered in the city, up from the figure of 11,099 in 2006.

"This is reflective of the increasing business confidence in our city," the mayor said.

YOUNG DAREDEVIL

A young girl climbs aboard a moving train in Taguig City, unaware of the danger she faces should she lose her footing or grip.

Pro-lifers hit reproductive health measure

By Marlon Ramos

ABOUT 500 PRO-LIFE advocates led by Cubao Bishop Nereo Odchimar yesterday held a prayer vigil in front of the Quezon City Hall to oppose the passage of a local ordinance promoting reproductive health and responsible sexuality in the city's primary and secondary schools.

Bearing placards and streamers, the protesters arrived at the City Hall grounds in a convoy consisting of 150 vehicles, in time for the 2 p.m. session of the City Council. They had come from the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman, Quezon City.

But the protesters, including a number of Catholic priests and nuns, were momentarily barred by authorities from entering the premises.

After 20 minutes of negotiations with security officers, the pro-life advocates were eventually allowed to pass through the main entrance of City Hall as they were praying the rosary.

"We actually did not intend to make any noise here. We just want to have our memorable pray by the City Hall and then we will proceed to the session of the City Council," Odgimar told the reporters.

"We just want our rights and voices be heard against an unconstitutional ordinance like this," he added.

Sponsored by several city councilors, the ordinance titled "Population and Reproductive Health Management Policy" arouses the use of condoms and other contraceptives to control population growth in the city.

The ordinance, which is now on its third and final reading, also orders all schools to teach sex education to Grade 5 and high school students.

The bishop cited the failed to get the vote of Vice Mayor Herbert Bautista and other members of the city council when they met in a meeting with Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS
LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Services Related to the ISO Certification, Surveillance and the Accreditation until CY 2011

1. The Land Transportation Office, through the General Fund CY ... intends to apply the sum of One Million Nine Hundred Ninety-One Thousand Pesos (Php 1,991,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for Services Related to the ISO 9001:2000 Certification and the Accreditation until CY 2010 Contract No. ... Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the opening of the financial envelopes.
2. The Land Transportation Office may ask for the submission of Letters of Intent to bid from interested bidders or apply for eligibility and short listing. Interested consultants must submit their ... on or before February 28, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. at LTO Library, East Avenue, Quezon City. Only those that are short listed will be notified to submit bids.
3. The BAC shall draw up the short list of consultants from those who have submitted LOIs and must have determined an original bid to commence with the submission of bids on March 4, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. and the Opening Bids and Evaluation Phase on March 4, 2008 at ... The short list shall consist of three (3) consultants. The criteria and rating system for short listing are detailed in the Eligibility Documents.
4. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the RIRR of RA 9184, and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to Filipino citizens or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) equity interest by Filipinos, as specified in the Eligibility Documents. In accordance with RA 9184 & ... only bids from short-listed consultants will be opened. The prospective eligible bidder is expected to submit the Eligibility Documents, in accordance with RA 9184 & ... at the time of the submission of bids. The bidder is also required to submit a valid Philippine Passport and Passport to Register their bids and declare that as an eligible bidder.
5. The PHILGEPS/PHILGEPS shall evaluate bids using the ... Based Evaluation Procedure. (QBE/SBE). The criteria and rating system for the evaluation of bids are detailed in the instructions to bidders.
6. Interested consultants may obtain further information from the Property Management Division (PMD) and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below during ... 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
7. The contract shall be completed within ... CY 2010.
8. The Land Transportation Office reserves the right to reject any and all bids, and to the bidding process, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

(LTO) Property Section
(Address) e. Road
Visayas Avenue, Quezon City
(Telephone Number)

Copy: ATTY. JIMMY G. PERGAN
Asst. Chief Legal

Some sidelights in the NBN-ZTE scandal

AS I WAS PREPARING TO come in the office yesterday I noticed our domestic help, Wendy, watching the proceedings of the ZTE-NBN scandal on TV with Bolodito "Joe" Lozada in testifying.

When I asked what she thought of the hearing, she replied: "Bwisto pareho lang sila, eh, ying-nawayan ang kwentuhan. Ziprit lang nagkabigayan daw! Mukha ngang kumayan na lalanggapin ng iba. (They're all the same. They're fighting over kickback. The reason the scandal surfaced is because one party would receive a smaller commission than the other)."

If you think that the ZTE-NBN scandal is beyond the understanding of ordinary folk, think again.

* * *

I remember during my days as a police reporter when big robbery cases were solved because one or two of the robbers were not satisfied with their share of the loot.

Almost always, in my days of crime reporting, big robberies were exposed and solved by the police because of stool pigeons or headless who ratted on their fellow criminals.

ON TARGET
RANNIE RAMOS

Even the fearsome falconing innocents was exposed because one of the investigators was not given his share of the 42-million loot taken by policemen from their bank robber-captives.

* * *

Jun Lozada learns about the huge kickback in the ZTE-NBN deal because, by his own admission, he was part of the conspiracy to defraud the government.

* * *

Even if Presidential Chief Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol has apologized to the Chinese-Filipino community over his racist remark on Jun Lozada—"Singer sa iyo ri-ekspert ka (you should be deported)"—it doesn't erase the fact that he has already done damage.

That remark was not only uncalled for, it was insensitive.

Apostol is not the only juvenile delinquent in the Arroyo constitutional ordinance like this," he added.

Sponsored by several city councilors, the ordinance titled "Population and Reproductive Health Management Policy" arouses the use of condoms and other contraceptives to control population growth in the city.

The ordinance, which is now on its third and final reading, also orders all schools to teach sex education to Grade 5 and high school students.

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS
MARITIME INDUSTRY AUTHORITY
REGIONAL OFFICE 12
(Address)
(Telephone Number)

RE: Application for grant of Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) to operate a non-scheduled passenger service in the operation of the non-motorized vessel under the provisions of ... and Executive Order No. 125 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations

(Applicant) — Case No. (CPC-12-07-00)

ORDER

This refers to the application for grant of Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) to operate the following route(s) in the non-motorized vessel under the provisions of ... and Executive Order No. 125 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations:

Name of Ships	Ships Passing Stations	SCHEDULE OF TRIPS	SCHEDULE OF RATES
(Name of Ship)	(Ship Passing Stations)	(Schedule of Trips)	(Schedule of Rates)
		Non-scheduled Passenger Service	Chartered

The Applicant made known the complete details of the route and to any other trip to be made thereafter of Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) Regional Office No. 12 (MARINA RO 12).

The Applicant shall be required to submit a complete posting of the ship's registration certificate, the certificate of ownership, passenger certificate, or applicable.

The Applicant shall be required to submit a complete posting of the ship's registration certificate, the certificate of ownership, passenger certificate, or applicable.

The Applicant shall be required to submit a valid Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC), and comply with all the requirements as mentioned therein.

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the posting of the ship's registration certificate, the certificate of ownership, passenger certificate, or applicable.

The Applicant shall be required to submit a valid Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC), and comply with all the requirements as mentioned therein.

SO ORDERED.

(Name of Director)
Director

Las Piñas IT school to offer free courses

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE LAS PIÑAS CITY GOVERNMENT IS set to offer various one-year courses on information technology with the construction of a training facility for the city's scholars.

The three-story, 25-classroom Information Technology Training Institute building will be able to accommodate 2,500 students in two sessions per day.

Mayor Vergel Aguilar said the IT school would benefit at least 60 percent of the city's 4,000 public high school students graduating this March, by offering them free and quality college education.

"Education is the best gift I can give to the children I governed. The youth of Las Piñas City deserve the best free education we can provide," he added.

To be called the Dr. Filemon C. Aguilar Information Technology Training Institute, the school will offer one-year courses on web development, graphic design and animation and programming.

The IT school is a brainchild and pet project of the mayor, whose father, Dr. Filemon Aguilar, was also once the city's mayor.

LOVE GEMS
A jewelry store cutter works on one of the 100 diamond necklaces which will be given away in a contest on 100 couples on Valentine's Day. (PHOTO BY RAMON ESTELLA)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION
(Address)

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
Petitioner,

— versus —

(SSC Case No. ...)

(Name), (Name), (Name)
Respondents.

SUMMONS

(Name) PALAD

GREETINGS:

You are hereby required to file within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this Summons in the office of the Legal Department, 3rd Floor, SSS (Address), Quezon City, your Answer to the Petition filed by petitioner SSS for collection of unpaid contributions and the non-remittance of premiums thereon.

You are further required to appear on such date as may hereafter upon the settlement through counsel, Atty. Conrado C. Tan, of the SSS Dominguez City Branch Office at Rizal Bldg., Gateway Ave., Dominguez City.

If you fail to answer within the time prescribed above, the Hearing Commission may, motu proprio or upon motion of petitioner, proceed to receive evidence and render judgment pursuant to section 4(a) of Republic Act No. 1161, as amended by Republic Act No. 8282, otherwise known as the Social Security Law of 1997.

ADDRESSED:
(Name) City Prosecutor Dominic C.L. (...)

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION

(Date Published: ...)

METROBRIEFS

Couple attacked; woman killed

A 40-YEAR-OLD woman was killed while her live-in partner was wounded when an unidentified man attacked them while they were sleeping in San Miguel, Manila yesterday morning. The victim, a scavenger identified only as "Gloria," died of multiple gunshot wounds while her partner, Fred Villanueva, was hospitalized for two bullet wounds in the leg. They were attacked at around 3 a.m. in a condemned building near the Islamic Center on Carlos Palanca Street. PO2 Norman dela Rosario of the Manila Police District homicide division said in his report that the couple were asleep when a man fired upon them and fled afterward. Self-taught said Villanueva told the police that they had incurred the ire of another couple although he did not provide details.

Allison M. Lopez

Man found guilty of murder

A MAN accused of killing his own husband of his former wife has been sentenced to life imprisonment by a Manila court after he failed to prove that he did it in self-defense. Executive Judge Reynaldo Roa of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 30 found Julius Madrid guilty of killing Arnel Bueza on July 1, 2005 in Binondo. Bueza, gay, due to overwhelming evidence that the crime was premeditated. The case was transferred to the Manila RTC after Sec. Madrid's former wife was granted her change of venue. Bueza was stabbed to death by Madrid inmate of his, who claimed that the former was "still angry" at her for marrying another man after their 12-year marriage was annulled in Feb. 28, 2002.

Allison M. Lopez

Over 50 killed in Iraq car bomb, gun attacks

BAGHDAD—CAR BOMBS AND gunmen struck near US offices, police and civilians in northern Iraq, killing as many as 53 people. The attacks, which occurred as the American military released a captured cleric and another document they say show al-Qaida in Iraq wielding sizable clout in Britain against its brutal tactics.

Sunday's violence coincided with a visit by US Defense Secretary Robert Gates to Baghdad, where he warned the hard-drawn fierce Iraqi political leaders on how to stabilize the country despite promising new signs of progress toward forming a government.

The deadliest bombing on Sunday was near Balad, 80 km north of Baghdad, against a checkpoint manned jointly by Iraqi police and members of an awakening group.

Iraqi police said a suicide truck bomber targeted a checkpoint manned by 130 allied fighters and Iraqi police at the entrance of a bridge in the district of Sadeh on the outskirts of Balad. Security forces opened fire on the driver, but he managed to detonate his payload, devastating a nearby car market and other stores.

Police in the joint coordination center of the surrounding Salahuddin province and Iraqi official said 39 people were killed and 87 others were wounded. Capt. Kadhi Hamid said many residents in the predominantly Sunni area had received threats directly from the city because they feared going to the hospital in Sadad's majority Shiite center.

The US military put the casualty toll at 33 killed, 35 wounded and said a car bomb exploded near an Iraqi checkpoint in a market in Balad, but it did not confirm it was a suicide attack. US and Iraqi forces had secured the area and the wounded had been evacuated to hospitals, according to a statement.

It was one of the worst bombings this year amid a recent lull in violence and underscored US warnings that al-Qaida in Iraq remains a serious threat despite military offensives that have severely curtailed its operations.

The explosives came hours after suspected al-Qaida linked insurgents stormed two villages near the Syrian border but were repelled by US-allied fighters and Iraqi security forces in clashes that left at least 22 people dead.

Sheik Hamis al-Obeidi, the head of the Mo'ezz-ad-al-Qaida group, and other officials said the 22 killed included 10 militiamen and six members of the so-called awakening group in the area, as well as four women and two children.

The US military in northern Iraq confirmed an attack on ground housing by Sunni allies against al-Qaida in Iraq near Hit, just about 160 km west of Mosul, saying five US-allied fighters were killed, five wounded and 16 insurgents were killed.

Insurgents also attacked a group of civilians elsewhere in the northern Nineveh province on Sunday, killing five men and wounding seven. Police said the attack occurred in the village of Al-Hamdaniya, 30 km east of Mosul. Three policemen who patrolled in a suicide car bombing at a checkpoint in the Anbar city of Fallujah and 18 bullet-riddled bodies showing signs of torture.

Sen. John Kerry, Georgia Sunday, a US military spokesman, and the documents released Sunday offered proof that al-Qaida in Iraq had been severely disrupted by the so-called awakening movement and changing US tactics, but he stressed the terror network was by no means defeated. AP

HILA

Army Ranger gets 10 years for killing unarmed Iraqi

CAMP LIBERTY, IRAQ—A SOLdier pleaded on Sunday sentenced an Army Ranger to 10 years in prison for killing an unarmed Iraqi detainee and planting a machine gun near his body to mislead investigators.

The ranger, Spc. Evan Vela, has already served 225 days in American military detention in Kuwait and will receive a dishonorable discharge. He will be transferred to an American military prison in the United States. The government had sought a prison term of at least 15 years, and Vela could have received a life sentence. His lawyer said that the family would appeal.

Vela, of Idaho, stamped in his chair as he heard the verdict, and his wife, Alyssa Carnahan, broke down in tears.

The eight-member military panel deliberated for three hours before reaching the verdict on the third day of the court-martial. The murder trial was the third related to the killing of Qasim Nasir Khudair al-Janabi, a taxi driver and father who stumbled, with his son Mustafa, 17, into Vela's sniper hide-out.

Vela and his squad leader, Staff Sgt. Michael S. Hensley, detained the father and son for about 30 minutes. Then they released the boy, and Vela shot al-Janabi in the head with a 9 millimeter pistol, killing him.

Prosecutors argued in their closing statements that Vela "acted and shouted" the planting of the gun and drew inaccurate conclusions in presenting lies about the killing. AFP

South Korea's No. 1 national treasure torched

SOUTH Korea's No. 1 national treasure Namdaemun burns down as firefighters extinguish a fire in Seoul, Feb. 11. Namdaemun, literally "the great southern gate," was the southern gate of the original walls surrounding Seoul during the Joseon Dynasty. The construction of this gate began in 1393. AP

SEOUL—A 600-YEAR-OLD GATE in central Seoul famed as South Korea's number one national treasure and the country's landmark symbol has been destroyed, possibly by an arsonist, police said on Monday.

The base of the gate, whose history is dramatized into South Korean school children from an early age, caught widespread shock and dismay to ordinary citizens, many of whom gathered to look in horror as a national icon reduced to ashes.

Officials said the fire that engulfed Namdaemun, or "Great South Gate," was believed to have been committed late on Sunday but reignited after midnight, destroying the wooden structure, despite the efforts of more than 100 firefighters.

"It feels like the pride of the nation and hope is lost and crumbled," said onlooker Lee Mina, a Seoul homemaker.

Kim Dae-sung of the cultural property panel in charge of repairs of the five links to Buenos Aires history in a fiercely modernized city. Experts said a note because of structural design and manipulation by nearly everyone involved led to the destruction.

"Without doubt the fire could have been controlled in the early stage," said Professor Lee Kyung of Seoul National University of Technology, had the firefighters targeted the right spot. "Someone could have gone inside the structure . . . I just don't understand."

Architecture professor and disaster prevention expert Soh Jun-hwee of Kwangwoon Uni. society said key parts of the gate, including the ceramic roof, were wooden, which made the blaze nearly impossible to contain since it began spreading.

Police said they were searching for a man who is a witness said broke into the stone and wooden structure and started the fire. However, they did not rule out any motive and limit to the cause.

"We're investigating a number of possible causes of the fire, including arson and faulty electric wiring," said Namdaemun Police Station chief Kim Byung-soo.

Police were also going through the tapes recorded by closed-circuit TV cameras near the gate but had not been able to identify a man entering the structure, Reuters said.

Firefighters, who said they needed to proceed cautiously to preserve Namdaemun, doused the structure with water but did not break through the roof to enter the wooden pavilion to extinguish the fire inside, police officials said.

The gate was constructed in 1398 and served as the main southern entrance for Seoul when it became Korea's capital more than 600 years ago and was a walled city, the Cultural Heritage Administration said. Reuters

Egypt court allows return to Christianity

CAIRO, EGYPT—CAIRO'S HIGHEST civil court on Saturday ruled that 12 Christians who had converted to Islam could return to their original church, ending a lower ruling that denied their identity and minority rights.

It was the second time in recent months that a court has upheld the rights of religious minorities, in a country that is 90 percent Muslim and where the distinction between civil law and religious principles is increasingly blurred.

The case involved Coptic Christians who had converted to Islam to obtain a divorce. The Coptic Orthodox Church does not allow dissolving a marriage. Many law, however, allows men to end a marriage easily.

For a time, Christians who converted in order to divorce were allowed by the courts to formally return to their original faith. But in recent years, as a more conservative sentiment has spread throughout the country and the government, the courts have not allowed converts to return to Christianity.

"The request was fully granted," said Hossam Bahgat, director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, a group based in Cairo that filed the case in association with Human Rights Watch. "The defendants are going to receive their ID cards, as Christians."

Egyptian law does not officially present Muslims—whether they are former Christians or not—from leaving their religion. While it is relatively easy to convert from any faith to Islam, government officials have taken the view that forming Islam is opposing and therefore is not permitted.

With its decision, the court has returned a lower court ruling forbidding reconversion. But it also appears that the court has not opened the door for lifelong Muslims to convert to Christianity. Last month, the same court ruled against allowing Mohammed Ahmed Hegazi, a Muslim convert to Christianity, to have access to official papers confirming to his new religion.

"It's a big step for religious freedom in Egypt, but religious freedom still only for Coptic people once they form our converts to Christianity," said Ramadan Nagga, a lawyer who worked on behalf of the 12 converts.

The ruling comes in the context of a wider legal battle over identity cards and minority rights in the country.

The important case is the first to have come before a court discussion on issues of conversion, apostasy and not only among intellectuals. It is starting to go to the courts now," Bagbat said.

New York Times News Service

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Pelaez Compound, Quezon City, North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Supply, Delivery, Installation and Commissioning of 04 Type, Piston Type and Portable Type 60-ton capacity Electronic Truckscales

The National Food Authority (NFA) now invites interested firms from eligible Bidders for the Supply, Delivery, Installation and Commissioning of 04 Type, Piston Type and Portable Type 60-ton capacity Electronic Truckscales, as per following project sites:

LOT	QTY	PROJECT SITE	TYPE	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT	CONTRACT PERIOD
I	2	Bagumbayan, Cotabato City Kidapawan City, Cotabato	Pit Type Pit Type	Php 600,000.00	120 Calendar Days
II	2	Buenavista, Agusan del Norte Butuan City, Agusan del Norte	Portable Type Portable Type	Php 600,000.00	120 Calendar Days
III	2	Tagbilaran City, Bohol Jagna, Bohol	Pit Type Pit Type	Php 600,000.00	120 Calendar Days
IV	2	Tagbilaran City, Bohol Tagbilaran City, Bohol	Portable Type Portable Type	Php 600,000.00	120 Calendar Days
V	2	Legazpi City Daraga, Albay	Pit Type Pit Type	Php 600,000.00	120 Calendar Days
VI	2	Roxas City, Capiz Roxas City, Capiz	Pit Type Portable Type	Php 600,000.00	120 Calendar Days

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using the prequalification as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act (GPRA). Bidding is open to all interested bidders, whether local or foreign, subject to the conditions for eligibility and to such a extent provided in the GPRA. Prospective bidders should participate in bidding of the Lot/s they intend to bid. Bidders shall submit their bids in accordance with the eligibility criteria and the contract. The bidder shall have completed within the last 5 (five) years prior to the date of submission and receipt of bids, a contract similar to the Project. The bidder must have completed not less than 1 (one) similar contract in the area of specialization equivalent to the total ABC. For this purpose, similar contracts shall refer to the supply, delivery, installation and commissioning of Truckscales.

Interested bidders may obtain further information and examine the Bidding Documents at the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat, 3rd Floor, NFA Building, North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, Tel. No. 925-2041 loc. 3102 or 925-2043 and during office hours from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee, in cash, in the amount of Fifteen Thousand Pesos (Php 15,000.00) per lot.

The Bidding Schedule is as follows:

Issuance of Bidding Documents and Bidding Documents	February 10 to 24, 2006
Pre-Bid Conference	February 16, 2006, 9:00 a.m.
Deadline for the Submission of Bids	March 10, 2006, 9:00 a.m.
Opening of Bids	March 10, 2006 immediately after submission of bids

The venue for the Pre-bidding Conference and Submission and Opening of Bids shall be at the 3rd Board Room, 3rd Floor, Pelaez Bldg., North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of Cash, Manager's Check or Cashier's Check or Bid Securing Declaration in the amount Thirty Thousand Pesos (Php 30,000.00) per lot.

It is required that prospective bidders must have a single largest contract completed within the last five (5) years prior to the date of submission and receipt of bids which is similar to the project and whose value is at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract.

The NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the Bidding Process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(sgd.) LORNELI C. JAVIER
Deputy Administrator for Operations
and Chairman, BAC

'Jaws' actor Roy Scheider dead at 75

ACTORS Roy Scheider, left, and Robert Shaw during filming of the movie "Jaws." AP

LOS ANGELES—ACTOR ROY Scheider, a two-time Oscar nominee best known for his roles as a small-town police chief in "Jaws" and his portrayal of famed choreographer Bob Fosse in "All That Jazz," died on Sunday at age 75.

Scheider died of complications from multiple myeloma, a cancer of the blood cells, at the Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian in Newport Beach, California, said his publicist Judy Boals.

A classically trained actor recognized for his angular facial features and heavy-lidded eyes, the New Jersey-born Scheider often played hard-bitten loners or everyman guys caught up in extraordinary circumstances.

He earned his first Oscar nomination for his supporting role as a narcotics detective partnered with Gene Hackman in the 1971 crime drama "The French Connection."

Eight years later, he was nominated as best lead actor for playing the overworking, pill-popping Fosse alter ego Joe Gideon in the semi-autobiographical "All That Jazz," which Fosse co-wrote and directed.

But Scheider may perhaps best be remembered as the intrepid police chief of a seaside resort who goes on a hunt for a giant man-eating shark in Steven Spielberg's blockbuster "Jaws." Reuters

The WORLD

Julie Lawrence B. Cueva

Islamist parties face drubbing in Pakistan polls

PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN—PAKISTANI VOTERS ARE expected to succeed where President Pervez Musharraf has failed, pushing back the Islamist tide in Peshawar, before making for provincial capital of North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Parliamentary and provincial assembly polls set for Feb. 18 will take place against the backdrop of a Taliban and al-Qaeda campaign to destabilize President Pervez Musharraf.

For all the revulsion over al-Qaeda-wielding suicide-attacks, conservative religious folk of the north have more immediate concerns, like lack of jobs, rising food prices, power outages and gas shortages that left them without heat over the winter.

The mullahs who have held power in NWFP as well as public rates aligned with the unpopular Musharraf have become discredited.

"What have they done for us, our people?" asked Rehman, who sells a multihued black cyclist scarf by men and women in the ethnic rhythm lands of the northwest.

"They have done nothing. Look at this broken road," he scoffed, pointing to a pothole.

Qazi Gul Hussein, NWFP provincial chief of the six-party Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), says his Islamist alliance will do better than 2002 because it is the least corrupt.

"Real clinics doesn't jive with what many people think.

One political cleric has a reputation for making money through smuggling diesel, reliant for crossing off contributors manner for plastic cases they confess.

Yet, Pakistani voters have shown high tolerance for corruption in the past, so long as elected leaders delivered, which is what people say the Islamists have failed to do.

"I voted for them last time because everybody was voting for them, but they have done nothing," said Abdul Latif, a young bearded, bespectacled man selling women clothes at another stall.

The Islamist parties won 17 percent of seats in the National Assembly at that last election in 2002, having never notched up double figures before. They also won power in NWFP and shared power in Baluchistan, the poorest of Pakistan's four provinces.

What happens in NWFP and Baluchistan would be crucial when it comes to deciding who forms the government in Islamabad as they only account for 69 of the 342 seats in the National Assembly.

But three provinces border Afghanistan and represent the frontline of the war on terrorism.

The government will have no easier time fighting militancy without the Islamists in power locally.

The coming polls are expected to see a comeback by moderate parties that were unceremoniously ousted by Musharraf after he took power in an army-generated following a coup in 1999.

But a low turnout is expected. Officials say the recently relaxation is "normal" in only six of NWFP's 24 districts.

Nevpaz Interior Ministry Abdul Ahmed Khan Hoshyar, an ally of Musharraf and regarded as a moderate force, was fatally pursue to campaign having survived two suicide attacks last year.

On Saturday, a suicide struck in the southwestern town of Chamkani killed at least 15 people at a rally for the Awami National Party (ANP), an ethnic Pashtun party destroyed by a military establishment which favors centralized government.

Analysts say the Pakistan Peoples Party's Party of assassinated opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, and ANP could end up forming a coalition government in NWFP.

"We get the biggest applause in public meetings when we attack the MMA and General Musharraf," Shahid Khattak, the secretary-general president of ANP said.

Reuters

Winehouse grabs 5 Grammys

LOS ANGELES—TRAPPED hell a world away by the place she promised to never "go, go, go," a vibrant, exuberant Amy Winehouse dominated the Grammys, winning five awards and delivering a defiant performance of her semi-biographical hit "Rehab" via satellite from London.

Winehouse, nominated for six awards, lost the final prize in Sunday night's ceremony in a shocker when electric three-week soul album of the year for "Raise The Roof."

"You know it's been 43 years since the first and only time that a jazz artist got the album of the year award," Hancock said, then proceeded to honor "the giants upon whose shoulders I stand, some of whom like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, ... unquestionably deserved the award in the past. But this is a new era, that proves that the impossible can be made possible."

For a while it seemed impossible that Winehouse would get to turn at all. Her severely watered-selling rehabilitation centre after months of erratic behaviour and canceled performances, not to mention the outlandish "no, no, no" resistance of her hit song.

As the ceremony approached, suspicion built over whether the British singer's drug troubles would cost her a work visa. When her visa application was rejected Thursday, Grammy producers managed for her to perform remotely. On Friday, the US government reversed itself and approved the visa, but it was too late for her to make the cross-continental trek.

So she took the stage at almost 4 a.m. London time Monday before a small cabaret audience, wearing a sly smile as she performed a softer, soulful rendition of the hit that'll no doubt help cement her comeback and recorded performances, not to mention the outlandish "no, no, no" resistance of her hit song.

GRITTY Hip-hop singer Amy Winehouse in a June 21, 2007 picture. AP

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Philmoralez Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Chiloa
Text as you feedback: Inquirer.com/manilaphilharmonique to 2399 (Globe) or 7826 (Smart) E-mail: ps_sports@inquirer.com.ph

- **Russia,** US, France advance to Davis Cup quarters /A24

VICTIM/JUDGE: Manny Pacquiao told not to forgive and forget.

Pacman loses ₱7.2M to driver's 2nd wife

Boxing hero's signature forged at LA bank

By Inquirer Sports

MANNY PACQUIAO HAS RECEIVED another lose blow. And, again, it occurred outside the boxing ring.

The Filipino superstar, widely known to his fans for trusting and generous to people close to him, was allegedly duped of down $100,000 (about ₱7.2 million) by a certain Pia Quijada, who is the second wife of his driver Joseph Jose, according to a Team Pacquiao insider.

The full amount was withdrawn from the bank during a two-year period.

Quijada allegedly forged Pacquiao's signature to unauthorizedly siphon off the huge amount from a bank account in Wells Fargo on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, where Pacquiao initially deposited $300,000 in December 2006.

The fraudulent withdrawals were supposedly confirmed by Pacquiao's wife Jinkee, who returned from Los Angeles on Feb. 6.

Based on the bank's records, Quijada managed to cash checks in amounts ranging from $800 to $10,000.

Quijada was also accused of transferring $40,000 from Pacquiao's Sunset Boulevard account to a newly opened account in Wells Fargo, Burbank, the same source said.

The latter was uncovered Thursday last week when Michael Ilarza, a member of Pacquiao's inner circle, received a call from Hilma Rodriguez, the assistant vice president of the Wells Fargo branch in Hollywood.

Rodriguez asked Ilarza whether Pacquiao still maintained a deposit he had an account with the bank, the source said.

Ilarza then informed Pacquiao, who had apparently lost track of the deposit, which he opened in the company of Jose and Quijada using the couple's Los Angeles address.

Only $19,000 remained

When he went to the bank, Pacquiao discovered that only $19,000 remained of his original $300,000 deposit.

Pacquiao was so upset he reportedly called it a day after slumber fasting for six rounds at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles.

The Pacman is preparing for his March 15 rematch with WBC super featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez.

Pacquiao returned to the bank to finish his questioning by the Anti-Fraud Unit and was given some 500 checks that bore his forged signature. Some of the checks were even endorsed and cashed by Quijada.

When the police started their investigations Friday morning, Quijada was said to have begged for forgiveness from Jinkee and said she was willing to do anything for her.

Jose, the same source said, also sent a text message to Pacquiao asking for forgiveness.

Jose reminded Pacquiao about the case of his former chief-of-staff Joy Inumerable, who allegedly also defrauded him of the refunds amounting to $150,000 a couple of years ago.

Despite being sacked, Fuentes was able to return to Pacquiao's good graces. He was even shown standing behind Pacquiao atop the ring at the end of his rematch with Mexico idol Jeanette Lee October.

According to the Team Pacquiao source, Pacquiao called Jinkee to seek her advice on what to do with the couple.

Jinkee was said to have told her husband not to forgive the couple, reasoning out that some people have been taking advantage of his soft heart and kindness.

Whether Pacquiao will heed her advice, however, remains uncertain.

Hurting James Yap manages to shine

By Jane Navarro

JAMES YAP CAN BE LETHAL OFF spite extreme physical agony.

The former Most Valuable Player remembered the pain-assuaged by an assortment of medications—that brought his Purefoods TJ Giants to the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup Finals Sunday night.

Yap scattered 28 points in the Giants-reserved to an 83-77 win over the Red Bull Barako in Game 7 of their semifinal series. The heroic performance earned him the Smart Asset Player of the Week award from the PBA Press Corps.

"I don't see any reason not to play if I can play through the pain," said Yap, who received the recognition for the fourth time this conference.

That scorching performance recalled the 25-point showing he delivered in a 96-91 Purefoods squeaker in Game 5 when he suffered a bruised groin aggravated by a frenzied knee a week before.

"I knew the effort would be worth it because if we lose, there would be no more tomorrow," said Yap.

"It's amazing to see a player rise to the challenge even after an injury," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio. "His amazing performance in Games 5 and 7 propelled our team to the finish."

Ironically, Yap came up with his best scoring performance when he was supposed to be out of action after playing no more minutes in the series.

"Our whole people thought that he might have run out of gas. So surprised everybody with an amazing display of basketball skills in this most important game of the conference," said Gregorio.

REVING TO THE CHALLENGE: Injured and all, James Yap still makes it happen.

Purefoods now goes for a fifth championship in the conference formerly dubbed as the All-Filipino Cup against Sta. Lucia Realty in the best-of-seven finals starting Friday.

The Giants hope to duplicate the Crispa Redmanizers' record of five All-Filipino championships.

And Yap agrees that achieving the feat is a very reachable target for the team.

"We don't want to miss the chance, as we will give it our best shot," said the MVP of the 2005-2006 season.

With four more days before the Finals, Yap expects Gilas time to rest and recuperate from his injuries.

Yap's wife, actress Iria Aquino, will celebrate her birthday on Valentine's Day, a day before he turns 28.

"It will be a loving birthday gift for her if we win Game 1," he said.

Fighting Maroons tap RP five's deputy coach

By Jasmine W. Paya

THE ASSISTANT COACH OF LAST YEAR'S high-profile national team made up of Philippine Basketball Association stars was among those given to handle the undefeating University of the Philippines Fighting Maroons in the 2008 UAAP eventy season.

It's a daunting task, college basketball observers agree, for Aboy Castro, the low-profile chief deputy of national mentor Chot Reyes.

Castro will be at the helm of a team still reeling from a winless campaign last year.

School officials announced yesterday Castro's appointment to the job last held by Joe Lipa, who ironically rewarded UP with his only championship in 1986.

"It's a big challenge. I'm confronted background as well as the residentials," said Escudero Collantes, the College of Human Kinetics dean and UP's representative to the UAAP board.

Chancellor Sergio Cao selected Castro, a 1992 UP chemical engineering graduate, among the nominees recommended by Collantes five months after the dismissal of Lipa.

Castro, who recently joined Talk 'N Text as Reyes' deputy in the PBA, will be the Maroons' third coach in four seasons. He feels the pressure to perform well as the team and school officials are confronted anxiety very this year.

The Maroons lost all their 14 assignments in the elimination round last season by an average of 20.8 points.

HERCULES: Collantes says Castro thatis done.

The cerebral Castro, who is also a graduate of the Philippine Science High School, is scheduled to meet the team today.

"We're giving him time to do the necessary adjustments in the team," said Collantes.

Mike Enriquez, Miguel de Guia, Paulo Gonzal and Martin Reyes are expected to bolster the Maroons under Castro, who will be one of two new mentors in the 2008 season.

The Adamson Falcons recently obtained coach Jing Reis as "acting coach" after mentor William "Boge" Adornado's contract expired last December. Reis will be the NU's Adamson coach in so many years.

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Benedicto, Torres dominate Clark Duathlon kickoff

SOUTHEAST ASIAN GAMES BRONZE medalist August Benedicto and up-and-coming Michele Torres flaunted top form Sunday to top the first leg of the 2008 Clark Duathlon Sprint Series at the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga.

The race, the first qualifying event for the Asian duathlon championship in March, drew 130 duathletes.

The 24-year-old Benedicto, who hails from Pampa, Tarlac, shook off the challenge from youthful rival Jessie Febreo and national teammate Jefferson Tolibas with a strong showing in the bike leg.

Benedicto, Tolibas and Febreo, a member of the national pool, entered Transition 1 bunched together before the event road winner pulled away after the first of four loops in the bike leg.

"I really wanted to keep Febreo and Tolibas within sight early in the race," said Benedicto of Filipinos.

Benedicto, the 2007 Asian U-23 champion, fired 1 hour, 30 minutes and 24 seconds in the 7.5K-run, 30K-bike and 5K-run event.

The 23-year-old Febreo finished second with a time of 1:32:39 while the veteran Tolibas settled for third in 1:32:52.

Triathlon champion George Tiling crossed up fourth in 1:35:40 while another 26-year-old national pool member Royad Dalusay was fifth in 1:36:09.

The 24-year-old Torres from Quezon City led from start to finish to rule the distaff race in 1:48:03.

"It's my first race and my first win and it's a good start," said Torres.

The event were jointly organized by Triathlon Association of the Philippines (TRIAP) and Clark Multisports Group (CMSG) and supported by Quirk Doors opener Corp.'s trustees head Noemi Garcia, Alldas and Mother Earth Foods.

Hope Singlahan Masagca outdrafted for second in the women's race in 1:51:06, followed by Jenny Guerrero (1:55:36), Amanda Capio (1:57:39) and Joyette Aquico (2:04:39).

Anika Mendoza and Elliot Tolibas (under 6 age group), Michaella Pua and Stephanie Klingbiemer (7-8), Rod Llanera Jones (10), Kirk Ormsby Rivera (12) and Hannah Shannon Benito and Lorie Cabico (13-15) emerged champions in the Super Kids races.

PSA Awards Night to be telecast on ABC-5

THE OFFICIAL COMEBACK OF ASIAN HOOP play for pro basketball league has linked up with the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) to air the 38th PSA Annual Awards Night at the SM Mall of Asia.

Recognized television network ABC-5 will broadcast in between games of the Philippine Basketball Association Finals the Feb. 16 event honoring the top athletes and coaches that did the country proud last year.

Reigning International Boxing Federation flyweight champion Nonito Donaire and 24th Southeast Asian Games Best Male Athlete awardee Miguel Molino have been both honored the Athlete of the Year honors by the country's oldest media organization.

"It is with pride and honor to be chosen as the official television partner of this year's 38th PSA annual awards Night," said Gerardo Olivo, sport production head of ABC-5.

PSA president Alabel Cardenas of the Times, meanwhile, announced that members who failed to receive their respective nominees can get it at the reception area of the Old Mall of Asia during the awards day itself.

Senate President Manny Villar is the guest speaker during the two-hour long ceremonies also hosted by Mateo's, the Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., Accel, Yehey, Rajah cutler's Recipes and Sculptures, Tagaytay City Mayor Bonifed Tolentino and Asa21.

The sports officials led by Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez are also expected to attend the event to be broadcast over dzBB Radio 918.

Filipino boxing hero Manny Pacquiao, a four-time recipient of the PSA Athlete of the Year award, is the 2007 PSA President's awardee honoree, while cager awards are to be given to golfer Frankie Minoza, billiards player Bonnie Alcaraz, chess Grandmaster Wesley So, pro cager Mark Caguioa, amateur cager Jason Castro, jockey Patti Dilema and to the owner of top horse Ex Toronto Sky.

LONE QUALIFIER. Harry Tolentino (left) can score better in Baguio City.

Baguio training for pugs urged

RMSC too dilapidated, says Monico

By Jane Nicanor

BAGUIO CITY—FOR DECADES, THE Rizal Memorial Sports Complex has nurtured the best amateur boxers on the land.

But the facilities at the country's former sports mecca have drawn scored the Beijing Olympics chief of mission Monico Puentevella couldn't have the sight of them now.

"It's the worst training ground for boxers," said the Bacolod congressman, citing the substandard living quarters of the fighters. He also noted that the components of the ring inside the RMSC is located in a major business and entertainment center.

Puentevella, a former commissioner of the Philippine Sports Commission, said he would try to reactivate boxing chief Manny Lopez to move the boxers out of the RMSC and transfer them to Baguio City for the remainder of the Olympic preparation for the Beijing Games.

Lopez, along with PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez, is in Cebu scouting for at least two foreign coaches.

"Apart from the high altitude and low pollution (in Baguio), the boxers and the coaches will also be free from distractions," said Puentevella, who firmly believes that boxing is the country's best gold-medal hope in this Olympics.

"With barely six months left before the Olympics, we should intensify the fighters' training," said Puentevella, also the POC vice president.

"There's no better way to do it than provide a good training environment for the boxers."

So far, only light flyweight Harry Tolentino has made it to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, scheduled to begin Aug. 8, with the national boxing team trailing behind on the other qualifiers in a Thailand qualifying tournament recently.

The national boxers will try their luck again in the last duties qualifying to be held on March 17-23 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Puentevella said Tolentino and the pro-vin ble qualifiers should be sportered in Baguio City in between their international exposures before the Olympics.

Juvic, Frankie join Indonesia Open

FILIPINO GOLF STARS JUVIC PAGUNSAN and Frankie Minoza open their campaign in the 2008 Asian Tour this week in the $1.2 million Astro Jakarta Astro Indonesian Open set Feb. 14 to 17 at the Cengkarung Golf Club in Jakarta.

Also competing in the second leg of this year's Tour are veterans Rhoel Gomez, Gerald Rosales, Tony Lascuña and Angelo Que, with Jeev Milkha Singh of India the lone Filipino on the scorecard.

Pagunsan hopes to ride the momentum of his recent win in the Jeh The Country Club International, but the spotlight will be on Minoza, who came close to winning the tournament last year.

Only a double bogey on the 14th hole on the last day killed Minoza's title bid as the Filipino star finished with a 71 that left him in a tie for second with Shiv Kapur of India and Andrew Tampkin of Australia.

Mikko Ilonen of Finland is back to defend his first career championship.

Pagunsan, Minoza and Manalusay all scored on the Asian Tour last year with finishes, Lascuña and Que given automatic slots in the tournament by finishing among the top 60 players last season. —E.A. Gonzalez

PAGUNSAN

SMC backs out from Asian Tour

THERE IS NO DENYING THAT BELinda has taken a big step in lifting its status from a sport previously associated with gamblers, hustlers and tramps.

It is now enjoying a boom in the country because of Efren "Bata" Reyes, who was recently named as one of the Asian Heroes by Time Asia, former world No. 1 player Francisco "Django" Bustamante and former world champion star Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan and Ronnie "The Volcano" Alcano.

A testimony of Pocket Sports, Reyes elevated billiards to a position of respect and recognition after winning the 1999 World Pool Championship in Cardiff, Wales, and becoming the first non-American to win the 1994 US Open 9-Ball Championship at Chesapeake, West Virginia.

That is why I was disturbed by the news that all of a sudden, the fine sport that is cheaper to try is out.

You see, three pool champions, together with their managers, recently formed the Billiards Managers and Players Association of the Philippines, announcing their membership with the billiards and hustlers

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

Congress of the Philippines and ending the resignation of BSCP chair Joe Makabenta of Raya Sports and president Ronie Pajarde.

In a result of the dispute, Jose Miguel Corp., one of the sport's major sponsors, has backed out from its renewed intent to support the planned SMC Asian 10-Ball Tour.

In a press statement, SMC said: "San Miguel Corp. expresses its deepest concern on the issue between the billiards players with their managers and the Billiards and Snookers Congress of the Philippines.

"As a long-standing supporter of billiards in the Philippines, SMC wishes to convey to both parties to settle their differences amicably for the sport and its many admirers.

"As it will clearly involve developments, SMC also wishes to clarify that there is no agreement between Raya Sports and SMC for the latter to support the planned Asian 10-Ball Tour."

Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco said the dispute is not good for the sport. "I'm afraid it has reached that level already."

In the past, many players who were bitingry to the BSCP wanted the Philippine flag to both the Asian Games and the Southeast Asian Games, skipping the lucrative US circuit where cash prizes worth a fortune were at stake.

On record, Bustamante teamed up with turnstile Lining in winning the 9-ball doubles gold medal, one of only three golds won by the Philippines in the 2002 Busan, South Korea Asiad. Lee Van Corteza won twice in the 2006 Vietnam SEA Games and Alvaro and Pagulayan likewise captured golds in the 2005 Manila SEA Games.

The only time the 33-year-old Reyes and Bustamante, 45, missed the trip to the Asiad was in Doha, Qatar, in 2006.

Reyes missed the trip because he was defending his world title in the IPT 9-Ball Championship in Florida. Bustamante pulled out of the team to avoid the risk of disqualification because he was taking steroids—a prohibited drug in the Asian Games—to treat the recurring pain from an injured elbow.

Makabenta and Pajarde, refuting the charges hurled against them, said they would just keep the BSCP working and functioning as the duly recognized national sports association by the POC. Makabenta also said he wants the players' managers off being behind the scenes.

"We know who's driving the van. They are ... Jerry Morfuno and Antonio 'Paolo' Pagsa."

Morfuno is the manager of former double world pool champion Alcano, while Paolo Pagsa is the 2006 Olympic silver medalist Rubilen "Superman" Gamotea, overseas international affairs Gonzalo Ortolla and domestic affairs and making sure Jeff de Luna.

Pajarde, the acknowledged godfather of Philippine billiards, basically Reyes, Bustamante and Pagulayan.

AMAZING DISCOVERIES BY TOP CHOICE

SPORTSWATCH

LSCA spikers gain s'finals

LA SALLE COLLEGE ANTIPOLO BOOKED Mary's title duel slayer to face Saint Jerome College on Sunday and claim the third semifinal slot in the elementary division overnight at Antipolo Sports Complex.

BEST Center Women's Volleyball League in the Green School open.

After their 25-15, 25-22 victory over Saint Jerome in the first set which they dropped 25-23, the La Salletes fought back to win the next two, 25-21, 25-22.

LSCA Bulgaria sacrificer Angelica Angeles with Lady School, which blanked Holy Cross College School, 25-12, 25-16.

San Beda Alabang scorers, default can Poveda on the last elimination match.

St. Joseph's School will face Bayanang Academy in the other semifinal contest.

Olympian Franco dies

OLYMPIAN AND ASIAN GAMES GOLD medalist Andres "Andy" Franco died of hypothyroidism pneumonia and cardiac arrest last Saturday.

Franco won the first Asian Games high jump long, leaving longest the gold medal in the 1st Asian Games in New Delhi in 1951. He topped the event contest in the 2nd Asiad in Manila in 1954.

Franco was also a basketball star and later coach. He was named Athlete of the Decade for the 1954 to 1964 by PAA and was honored in the league's 50th season.

He lives on the Franco Compound on San Nicolas Street, Zamora, Manila, interment is on Saturday.

CSI sets baseball tryouts

THE COMMUNITY SPORTS INC. ORGANization of Baseball Philippines Series, will hold a two-day tryout on Feb. 16 and Feb. 23 to select players who will have a ryding in the BP Series III slated March 23.

The first open tryout will be held at the Ayala Alabang Country Club baseball field No. 2 in Muntinlupa City from 8 a.m. to 12 noon while the second will have the Rizal Memorial ballpark, also starting at 8 a.m.

Participants are advised to have both versions by 8 a.m. Accompanied organizations and uniform requirements.

Eight teams are expected to vie for top honors in the BP Series III.

Standard 16-under chess up

THE NICE 16-UNDER STANDARD CHESS tournament gets under way on Saturday and Sunday and the 10-50 leaves active on Sunday on the upper second floor of St. Francis Square Commercial 140 Megastar in Mandaluyong City.

The 70-under standard event, a six-round Swiss with 90 minutes time control, is open to players born 1992 onward.

The 1950-born tournament, a two-round Swiss with 25 minute time control, is a one-day event open to all invited, amateurs and international players.

THEY'RE NOT DONE YET

Their chances defeat at the hands of the Japanese on Sunday notwithstanding, members of the Cebuana Lhuillier MP Davis Cup team, led by Asian Beh Lord Cecil Mamiit (standing second) vow to come back strong against Uzbekistan next month and avoid relegation to Group II. Tatsuma Ito and Mamiit, together with teammates PJ Tierro, Johnny Arcilla, Paolo Oliva (c), and Rik Dantes, were presented recently with sports accessories by top supporter Plaza Philippines, represented by Jerlyn Bongato, during a recent practice session at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

UAAP ROUNDUP

UE, UST capture fencing crowns

By Jasmine W. Payo

UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST AND UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas snagged top honors in the UAAP fencing tournament over the weekend at the Moro Elite Eagle gym.

UE captured the women's championship with Deadliest Asian Games gold medalist Michelle Sirandu powering the Amazons fencers to a three gold-one silver-four bronze medal finish, while UST relied the men's talents with a 9-7 1-2 haul.

The Amazons also sweep the women's individual awards with Sirandu bagging the Most Valuable Player plum and Tourna Shona Acuzalia clinching the Rookie of the Year award.

UST veterans Jose Miguel Cagalingan bagged the men's MVP title while Joshua Pastal earned the top rookie citation.

Rwanda ruled the individual epee event after he topped UE in the team epee gold, while Mary Rose Allonos savored the third gold in the individual sabre.

Cagalingan also provided two of UST's three gold medals with wins in the individual and team foil. The third UST triumph came from individual foil champion Jessie Pastal.

In football, Ateneo and Far Eastern entered a championship showdown in the men's competition even as the race for the second title slot remained tight in the women's division with FEU earlier clinching the first crown berth.

The Blazers buries battled to a 1-1 draw against the Maroons last Sunday at De Ocampo Field and matched a finals berth with a 6-1 2-0 win draw formulas.

FEU earned last year's champion UST with a 3-1 victory for a similar 6-1 2-0 card.

University of the Philippines remained unbeaten in eight games in softball while UST claimed the solo lead in baseball with an 8-1 slate.

In volleyball, the Tamaraws baked the Tigers' phenomenal 13-game winning run in the men's tournament to share top spot with their victims.

FENCER Mary Rose Allonos: Gold for UE.

Foundation, pro pool tournament launched

THE TWO WINNING BILLIARDS INCrisis may have different ideals but they have the same goal: improve the welfare of the country's pool players.

The Oscarine-led side after officials of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP), led by its president Ernie Sajardo, geared the launching of the Philippine Billiards Development Foundation (PBDF) over the weekend.

Among the PBDF's objectives, according to officials Alfredo Ordoño and Willie Adeguen, is to provide life insurance and monthly salary to its players. Referees, trainers and coaches would also be provided benefits.

Besides primary concern in securing and facilitating the assistance of visas of players for overseas tournaments.

"We've been waiting for this for a long time," said Marlon Manalo in Filipino. "We are happy that there is a foundation that will look after the players."

Manalo, Antonio Gabica and Jeffrey De Luna were among the players who attended the launching.

On the other hand, the Games and Amusements Board-recognized Billiards Managers and Players Association of the Philippines (BMPAP) has revised the Philippine Professional Billiards League (PPBL).

To be patterned after the Philippine Basketball Association, organizers Dexter Mariano, Arturo Payot and Jonathan Ty said the PPBL is luring 18 corporate sponsored teams to battle in a open-finish, grind-out-to-the-end format this year.

Players like Efren "Bata" Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante, Ronnie Alcano, Alex Pagulayan, Dennis Orcollo, Roberto Gomez, Lee Van Corteza, Gandy Ani, Antonio Gabica, Warren Kiamco and Rodel Gallego will be distributed among the teams through a draft.

BMPAP spokesman Edwin Reyes said the initial plan is to have eight (8) players per team.

"It could be 10 players who will have regular income," said Reyes.

Moreover, Reyes noted, the players' participation in tournaments, especially on the international level, will be shouldered by their respective teams.

"Of course, only BMPAP members will be allowed to play in the league," Reyes pointed out. With a report from Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

REDS RULE ESTELLA CUP Joepin Pitalaga (right) of the Red team jars to the ball ahead of seasoned Pedro Parra (left) and two other Blue squad players during the Estella Cup 2008 Sunday at the Manila Polo Club. Pitalaga topscored with six goals for the Red side, win, 10-8, in the six-chukker high-goal match. RUEL MOJARES

Executives gather in 6th FPI Classic

MORE THAN 100 EXECUTIVES HAVE signed up for the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) 6th Golf Classic slated on March 1 at the Tagaytay Midlands Golf Course.

Chief executive officers, chief operating officers and other senior executives of major corporations and industry association are expected to join in the fun for a worthy cause.

FPI is composed of 37 industry associations, 86 corporate members and four associate members representing the backbone of the Philippine manufacturing industry.

The tournament not only provides a venue for the captains of industry to build a camaraderie but also supports the efforts of FPI in anti-smuggling, developing the local manufacturing sector, providing companies with competitive labor, utilities and materials to keep pace with global competition and to make representation with the government for national policies that will be in the best interest of the nation.

Now on its 17th year, the FPI has been working for the growth of the Philippine industrial base, both in manufacture and agriculture.

It has also become very active in major economic affecting the industry such as international trade agreements and other trade practices; finance and investments; power/energy and environment; labor, productivity and competitiveness; tariff and taxation; procurement and monitor measures against economic offenses and other relevant issues.

As such, FPI not only became the "Voice of Industry" but the champion of it as well, bestowed by no less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo herself, during FPI's 16th Annual General Assembly on Aug. 15, 2007.

The 6th FPI Golf Classic promises to be an enthralling with generous giveaways and prizes.

For more details, call 722-1669 and 722-9737 or log on to www.fpi.ph.

Santo Tomas jin bags CPJ feather gold

RAFAELITO DELOS REYES OF THE UNIversity of Santo Tomas outpointed her University of the Philippines foe to bag the women's featherweight gold in the event Dream and Jessie Cadiz Palmos Jr. (UE) taekwondo championships at the Filoil Memorial Coliseum.

Valenzuela also outfought lightweight Jaime Bendaliza to bag her first major title in the tournament.

Other winners in the senior division were College of St. Benilde feather Dennis Rosel Bendin, La Salle-Dilla lightweight Allan Christopher Olivera, UST welter Jeffrey Bello and CSB heavyweight Clarence Nicole Verschura.

Bendin tripped national fighter Manuel Rivera jr., Olivera beat UP's Joshua Ben Villareal, Ong whipped Leyndon School's Jonathan Concepcion and Verschura toppled Jim Bedel's fourth de facto.

Pitweight John Paul Lizardo, (La Salle-Dilla), Jin Ennis Kathleen Abes (La Salle) and Jamiah Esther Marie Singson (UST) also pulled through.

Lizardo beat UST's Billy Joel Cortez, Briones topped UST's Jose Anthony Bernardo, Tomas Rosa whipped UPs' Ayn Marie Lizardo and Singson prevailed over teammate Aphrodite Balbanera.

Breeders vie for Cocker of the Year slots

THE NATIONAL COCKERS' ASSOCIAtion (NCA) holds its derby today at De Venzon Center in Pasig City to determine the leading contenders for the NCA Cocker of the Year.

The derby will feature the top bird dogs in the country as champions and imported abroad.

Those are by Gov. Jun Vincent, Boni Elizabet, Boy Jusay and K. Jimbon.

Participating this moment: Rudy Adam, Mindy Pacquiao, Sec. Ronnie Puno, Bebot Villar, Dino Garcia, Jun and Rudy Angara, Al Fernandez, Tony Espinosa, the Mandaluyong Brothers, Ray Ventura, Tonio Bautista jr. (California, USA, Sr. Dr. Santiago, Lando Zaldivar, Al Sayoc, Tony Suarez, Lenin Bautista jr., Tito Lagdameo, Ramon Ang, Willie Uy, George Ligado, Sec. Gilberto Teodoro, Ronnie Ong, Wilson Lee, George Ligado, Sec. Gilberto Teodoro, Jesse Robredo, Dante Gierran, Ray Rogers.

PUERTO PRINCESA MARATHON WINNERS. Robert Serrano and Iris Abis Bacaltos finish together after topping the Mile Marathon leg in the Palawan city. With the winners are (counter-clockwise from top) Nestle's Erwin Sau, Robin Arbolino, Alberto Kedlee of the City Sports Development Office, Nestle's Pat Dee-ong, local organizer Anthony Bolos, Nestle's Raul Mangaya, race organizer Rudy Biscocho and Nestle's Andie Rabanes.

Overseas trips await 5th Piata Cup winners

TICKETS TO CHOICE DESTINATIONS around the world will be given away at hole-in-one and raffle prizes in the Philippine ICA Agents Travel Association (PIATA) 5th Golf Cup on Feb. 18 at the Tila Gloria Golf Club in Cabuyao, Laguna.

Aside from the free tickets provided by major airlines in the 18-hole event, sponsors are also preparing a bonanza of hole-in-one prizes.

The leading airlines include Air Macau, Air Philippines, Asian Spirit, Bohol Aviation, Cathay Pacific, Cebu Pacific, China Air, Continental, Eva, Hawaiian, Japan, Malaysian, Northwest, Singapore, Tiger Airways and Singapore.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is an international industry trade group of airlines.

The main objective of the organization is to assist airline companies in different parts of the world achieve lawful competition and authority in prices.

De Jesus, Sy top Shaw golf

TOOTSIE DE JESUS AND GUEST Tommy Sy captured the overall championship of the 807 Shaw event while Joey Stevens nosed the tournament's only hole-in-one in the recent 19th Hill Shaw Golf Classic at the Pinch Wack Golf and Country Club.

De Jesus and Sy scored a 18-under par 60 in the scramble format in the final round and combined for a 10-under 134 in the aggregate in the Pro beyond for a 19th title.

Oliver Gan and partner Raffy Garcia were the low gross team championship with a 108 total.

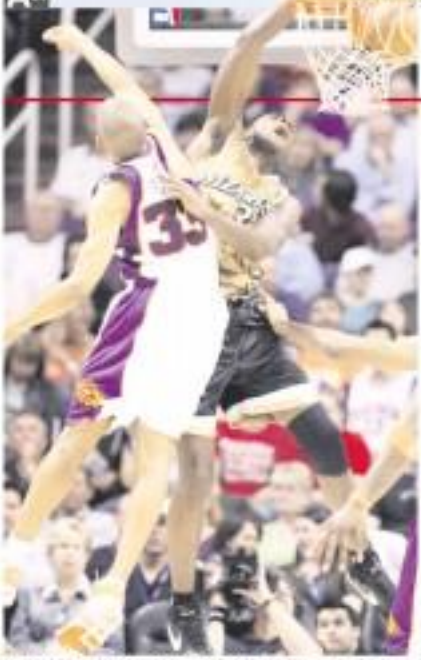
The Group I title went in the just of Lucky Tan jr. and Eddy Barcelo after amassing 186. The Nepalo Gonzalez-Ernie Sison duo won in Group II.

Stevens aced Pinch Wack's difficult par-3 eighth hole at the four-course using a 7-wood and a 4-iron No. 3 ball to win the Seiko.

CAGTI Motor president Felix Ang presents to Joey Stevens (center) the optimistic key to his Mercedes Benz. Also shown is Pinch Wack president Luis Yao.

The tam four was witnessed by flight mates Manuel Valdes Jr., Rainer Tamon and Atty. Juan Miguel Mercy.

Three other Mercedes Benz cars—two E-250s and a C-Class Elegance were also awarded as hole-in-one prizes in the tournament that attracted 240 players.



THE HIGHRISE: Brendan Haywood dunks over the Suns' Grant Hill (33) in their game Sunday.

SPORTS

Celtics pip Spurs; Lakers cool Heat

BOSTON—PAUL PIERCE scored 35 points and the Boston Celtics won their third consecutive game with a 98-90 win over the San Antonio Spurs on Sunday.

Ray Allen added 19 points and Rajon Rondo had 13 rebounds and 12 assists to go with five points to help Boston improve their record against Silvestre Conference rivals to 16-6.

"It was a great effort," Doc Rivers said reporters after the Celtics shelled up another win without injured forward Kevin Garnett.

"We played with a lot of intensity, and that's what it's going to take to beat those elite teams," Rivers added.

Tim Duncan had 22 points and 14 rebounds and Manu Ginobili contributed 21 for San Antonio, who had a five-game winning streak snapped.

The Spurs trailed by three with 5:13 to play but Michael Finley missed a three-pointer and Boston

THE Sun' Shaquille O'Neal scores the arena before the start of the team's game against the Wizards. AFP

outscored San Antonio 8-3 for the remainder of the game.

"Too many bad plays down the stretch," Duncan said of the defeat.

"A great shot by Mike (but credits to and not to actually for the game drawn the seventh three, and scoring like rare momentum as now."

Kobe Bryant scored 30 points when the Los Angeles Lakers spoiled Shawn Marion's Miami Heat debut with a 104-84 road win.

The loss was the seventh in a row and 22nd in 23 games for the Heat. Bryant had 15 points and 14 rebounds in his first game since joining Miami from the Phoenix Suns in a trade for Shaquille O'Neal.

The New Jersey Nets scored 21 consecutive points and shocked the Dallas Mavericks, 103-82, behind Vince Carter's 29 points.

The Nets earned a 48-34 defensive edge in the second quarter and cruised to victory in the second and third quarters.

The frustrated Mavericks shot a cold 36.5 percent from the floor with Dirk Nowitzki scoring only four of 16 shots in a 21-point performance.

Carmelo Anthony scored 27 points and Allen Iverson had 25 points and 13 assists when the Denver Nuggets pounded the Cleveland Cavaliers, 113-93, despite 30 points by LeBron James.

Tayshaun Prince connected on five three-pointers and scored 21 points to lead the Detroit Pistons to an eight-consecutive win, a 113-87 romp past the Charlotte Bobcats, who lost their sixth game in a row.

Andres Nocioni had 16 points and Jose Calderon contributed 15 points and 10 assists in the Toronto Raptors' 103-82 road win over the Minnesota Timberwolves. Reuters

Lowery downs Singh in Pebble playoff

PEBBLE BEACH, CALIFORNIA—American Steve Lowery clinched his first PGA Tour title in eight years by edging out 2004 champion Vijay Singh in a playoff for the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am on Sunday.

Lowery, 47, birdied the first extra hole on the Pebble Beach Golf Links, the par-five 18th, to win the winner's cheque for $1.008 million and his third Tour victory.

Three strokes off the pace overnight, Lowery fired a four-under-par 68 to overcome rain-soaked day on the picturesque Monterey Peninsula to finish the 72 regulation holes level with Singh at 10-under-par 278.

Fijian Singh had briefly led by three strokes before making three consecutive bogeys from the 14th but birdied the last for a 71 to force the playoff.

"This is the most meaningful of all my wins," a beaming Lowery told reporters after ending a PGA Tour victory drought dating back to the 2000 Southern Farm Bureau Classic and becoming the oldest champion at Pebble Beach.

Lowery whose 2007 campaign was hampered by an injury to his left wrist, changed into contention with a three-birdie, two-bogey start to the number 11.

Despite bogeying the 11th and 14th, Lowery grabbed the outright lead for the first time by calmly sinking a 19-foot birdie putt at the par-three 17th.

Singh, who appeared to have the title firmly in his grasp before his uncharacteristic errors over the event, struck a superb eagle approach to two feet on the 16th green to take the tournament into

STEVE Lowery celebrates his victory.

extra time.

However, the world number 11 found a fairway bunker off the tee on the first extra hole, hit a poor second shot and ended up with a plugged lie in a greenside bunker with his child before getting up and down for a par five.

Lowery, ranked 308th in the world, drove straight down the middle, laid up to run and delivered a pinpoint wedge approach to seven feet to set up his victory putt.

"I'm very disappointed," Singh said of his failed bid to become a 22nd PGA Tour title. "I let this one slip away. I didn't think I was going to lose this. I need to go to think and see what really went wrong."

American John Mallinger birdied three of the last four holes for a sparkling 65 and is tie for third place at nine under with Corey Davis (68) and fellow American Dudley Hart. (72). Reuters

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE	W	L	PCT	GB
Atlantic				
Boston	36	8	.818	—
Toronto	31	14	.689	5½
New Jersey	31	15	.674	6
Philadelphia	30	16	.652	7
New York	20	26	.435	16½
Central	W	L	PCT	GB
Detroit	34	12	.739	—
Cleveland	31	15	.674	3
Chicago	28	17	.622	5½
Indiana	21	24	.467	12½
Milwaukee	20	26	.435	14
Charlotte	10	36	.217	24½
Southeast	W	L	PCT	GB
Orlando	31	15	.674	—
Miami	23	22	.511	7½
Washington	19	26	.422	11½
Atlanta	17	28	.378	13½
Wizards	14	31	.311	16½
WESTERN CONFERENCE STANDINGS				
Southwest	W	L	PCT	GB
San Antonio	34	13	.724	—
Dallas	32	16	.667	2½
Houston	31	17	.646	3½
New Orleans	27	20	.574	6½
Memphis	13	37	.260	21½
Northwest	W	L	PCT	GB
Utah	33	16	.673	—
Denver	31	17	.646	1½
Portland	31	17	.646	1½
Oklahoma City	30	18	.625	2½
Seattle	23	25	.479	9½
Minnesota	15	33	.313	17½
Pacific	W	L	PCT	GB
LA Lakers	33	17	.660	2½
Golden State	30	18	.625	5½
Phoenix	30	19	.612	6
LA Clippers	19	29	.396	15½

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Russia, US, France bets enter Davis Cup quarterfinal round

PARIS—AUSTRALIAN OPEN CHAMpion Novak Djokovic suffered a disastrous end-of-year collapse as he failed to his brave bid to rescue Serbia's Davis Cup dream against Russia on Sunday.

The Serbs had trailed 2-1 overnight going into the final day of the World Group clash in Moscow and Djokovic, who had missed Friday's singles because of flu, battled into a two-set lead over Nikolay Davydenko.

He won 6-4, 6-2, 3-0 ahead after two and a half hours on court, but never for Russian Davydenko to win the third set 6-4, the Serbian restored complaining of dizziness and nausea.

"I decided to stop as I didn't want to risk my health," said Djokovic.

Davydenko's win restored Russia a place in the quarterfinals to April where it will face the Czech Republic which completed a 3-2 win over Belgium in Ostrava.

Defending champion United States said it plans a replay campaign in the heart of the nation's south for its quarterfinal against France.

Last spring, the Americans rode the support of fans in tennis-starved North Carolina to a sweep of Spain.

SWEDEN'S Jonas Bjorkman returns the ball to Israel's Harel Levy during their Davis Cup match. Bjorkman won, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3, 7-6.

Miller's twins Bob does dethroned Wayne Ferreiras, 6-0, 3-6, 7-6 (7/2).

Fraser completed a 7-5 whitewash of Rosenthal in Mike with Michael Llodra's and Arnaud Clement winning the reverse singles against Andrei Pavel and Horia Tecau respectively.

In Buenos Aires, Juan Mendoza came from 2-1 down overnight to beat Israel 3-2 with Thomas Johansson seeing off Dudi Sela 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 7-5 and Jonas Bjorkman beating Harel Levy 6-4, 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

The Swedes will have to travel to Buenos Aires for a quarter-final against Argentina which disposed of Britain 4-1.

Jonas Baker prevented an embarrassing whitewash for Britain when he saw off Agustin Calleri, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 in the final dead rubber.

The other last eight clash will see Germany welcome Spain. Philipp Kohlschreiber defeated Israels Harel Levy Hyung Taik, 6-0, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), to make sure of victory.

Spain opened up an unassailable 3-1 lead over Peru on Saturday to leave Feliciano Lopez and Fernando Verdasco beat Luis Flores and Juan Miranda, 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4). AFP

Swede clips world mark

BERLIN—SWEDEN'S SUSANNE KALLUR broke the 18-year-old world record for the women's 60 meters hurdles when she clocked 7.68 seconds as an indoor meeting in Karlsruhe on Sunday.

Kallur's time was 0.01 seconds inside the old mark of Ludmila Bragina, who was competing for the Soviet Union as Ludmila Narozhilenko when she set the record in February 1990.

"It's all just a result of the hard work I've been putting in over recent years," the 28-year-old Kallur told reporters after breaking the record in front of a crowd of 4,500.

Kallur, European ajcior hurdles champion indoors and outdoors, had been widely tipped to at least get close to the record after running 7.72 in Stuttgart last weekend.

"Of course I was feeling a bit of pressure but I just tried not to think about it," she said. Reuters

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Morales • Assistant Editor Daniel S. Marlowe

NASA ATENG ANG SWERTE MO!
PCSO

Budget deficit lowest in a decade

But analysts skeptical of gov't effort to balance '08 budget

By Michelle V. Remo

THE FIGURES SAY IT BEST.

The Philippines in 2007 posted a budget deficit of P9.4 billion ($230 million)—the lowest in 10 years and a fraction of its original target.

But some analysts remain skeptical of the government's achievement in significantly reducing last year's budget gap—its biggest is down to its 2005 level—and referred to it as a one-off performance.

"One should take this number in context of the P60 billion in assets that [the government] sold in 2007," said Jun Rong Ong, an analyst with JP Morgan. "If you take that out—and one should, because those are nonrecurring items—you have a budget deficit of closer to P300 billion."

The Philippines had set a target of limiting the deficit in 2007 to P63 billion, or 0.9 percent of the gross domestic product. But it ended the year where it swallowed the sale of state equity stakes and kept spending in check. The deficit-to-GDP ratio ended up last year.

"While [the government] completed 2007 on a budget position far better than the P63 billion deficit target, 2008 brings a new set of challenges," Finance Secretary Margarita Teves said in a press conference yesterday. "This is our budgetary priority to see to it that we guarantee the resources necessary to support higher levels of investments in infrastructure and social services."

Presidential Management Adviser Jose Ramon Gutierrez said the government's deficit target for this year, which is also lower than the P63 billion deficit target, 2008 brings a new set of challenges," Finance Secretary Margarita Teves said in a press conference yesterday. "This is our budgetary priority to see to it that we guarantee the resources necessary to support higher levels of investments in infrastructure and social services."

Presidential Management Adviser Jose Ramon Gutierrez said the government's deficit target for this year, which is also lower than the P63 billion deficit target set in 2007, but that target looks increasingly difficult as the engines of last year's performance—asset sales and moderate expenditure—start to sputter.

The Philippines has committed only P30 billion in privatization revenues this year and plans to accelerate infrastructure spending to double its economic [illegible] elsewhere in the United States, its main trading partner.

To meet the country's balanced budget goal, the government will instead have to [illegible] on collections, the Achilles [illegible] of the government's fiscal program due to underperformed tax revenues and corruption.

"If most of the heavy lifting has been done for these asset sales, then begs the question how viable the revenue-build is going forward," said Ong.

The government however maintained a [illegible] in the budget this year.

The latest deficit runs a total of [illegible] billion in revenues and [illegible] billion in expenditures, according to the DOF.

The year-end deficit of P9.4 billion was a reversal from the P22.6-billion surplus recorded as of November. Teves said the government spent more than what was programmed for December, mainly securing state-owned firms to implement various social services.

In December alone, the government incurred a P22 billion deficit. Spending during the month hit P112.4 billion, exceeding the program of P90.07 billion.

Doubts have been raised over the government's ability to balance its budget this year, given the collection shortfalls of the BIR and the BOC last year.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue, which provides [illegible] of government revenue, missed its collection target last year by 7 percent. The Bureau of Customs missed its goal by 8 percent.

The two agencies have also expressed doubt over their revenue collection targets this year, particularly amid recent uncertainties.

"Teves, however, still expressed confidence that the government would have the capability to meet this year's fiscal goal. She said measures are in place to enhance tax collection. —With a report from Reuters

NEW MAN AT THE HELM
Sandy Peters-Hernandez of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, second from left, followed by Makoto Maeda and Masahiko Ueki of Mitsubishi Motors Corp., during a ceremony that marked the inaugural Vios plant in the manufacturing giant's Philippine office. At the formal turnover rites held at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel on Jan. 29, Ueki officially succeeded Renge Takase as MMPC president and CEO.

IN THIS ISSUE

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■ Compromise on VAT issue pushed /B5

Peso slides on political concerns, closes at 40.90

By Doris C. Dumlao

ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT [illegible] assessment that it had registered a decade-low budget deficit in 2007, it still failed to impress a domestic financial market weakened by worsening jitters over domestic politics and the [illegible] global markets, currency traders said.

The peso yesterday closed at a four-week low of 40.90 against the US dollar, shedding 25 centavos from Friday's finish even after the government announced its deficit figures.

The local currency opened near the intraday peak of 40.83 and closed near the intraday low of 40.91, at a turnover of [illegible] million at the Philippine Dealing System.

"The [illegible] is changing from fundamentals to politics," said a currency trader from a big commercial bank. "The market is still looking at the good fundamentals, but I think it's more pulling some [illegible] on what's happening on the political front."

Most Asian currencies fell in tandem with [illegible] on [illegible] as [illegible] off to regional stocks, after a weekend Group of Seven meeting offered no quick fix for the turbulence in credit markets.

MSCI's measure of Asian stocks excluding Japan slipped 2.3 percent, as investors took their cue from a slide in US stocks on Friday.

Finance ministers and central bankers from the G7 industrialized countries warned that the global credit crunch would weaken the world economy but left it to individual countries to take their own measures to [illegible].

PAGE B2

Pancake House buys French chain, to launch in Vietnam

By Elizabeth Sandra Gazzat

FAST CASUAL DINING COMPANY Pancake House yesterday said that it had acquired French cafe bakery brand "Le Coeur de France" for roughly P300 million, seeing [illegible] the firm's foray into the international market.

In an interview, Pancake House chair Marlin Lorenzo said the company plans to launch the French bread and bakery line in Vietnam, a former French colony, after the success of Pancake's expansion in Malaysia.

Pancake House said in a separate disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) that it had purchased 300,000 shares of Boulangerie Francaise Inc., representing 100 percent of Boulangerie's issued and outstanding shares, for P99 million.

Pancake House International Inc., the company's wholly owned vehicle for its international franchising business purchased the trademark "Le Coeur de France" and all its related intellectual property rights from trademark owner Boulevard Limited for the [illegible] equivalent of P99 million.

Pancake House also valued P22 million to enter Boulangerie to be used in settling a portion of the latter's outstanding [illegible].

Le Coeur has a network of 11 cafe bakeries in the country, mostly located in shopping centers in Metro Manila, such as Robinsons Galleria, Shangri-La Plaza Mall and Glo Malls.

Le Coeur also supplies bread and bakery products to hotels, restaurants and [illegible] caterers.

Stanley Hwee plans to expand the outlets to at least 30 within the next 10 months. The expansion is expected to cost about P45 million to the company's coffers.

With the acquisition of Le Coeur, the Pancake House Group will have 300 stores generating sales of P3 billion this year. Lorenzo said that, aside from Le Coeur, Pancake House will launch its Japanese restaurant Teriyaki Boy in Vietnam.

Stanley plans to spend P60 million for the expansion of its brands in Vietnam.

In Malaysia, Pancake will also spend between P50 and P40 million to put up four new Pancake House stores.

Stanley Hwee recently premixed untapped markets with new brands such as "Singles," its Chinese take-out and delivery service, and the newly opened "Super Snack" at Waterfront Insular Hotel in Davao City. It also owns tea and grill restaurant chain Teriyaki's.

Politicians rat on each other

TO ALL MYREADERS, GREETINGS for the Lunar New Year from me DONG HEI and my wife HAT GOOI. The Year of the RAT is not yet overthread, it still has to be rat-fied. I have been hearing Chinese and here are some of the phrases I know:

Did you go to the beach? Wai Si So Tan?

Are you harbouring a criminal? Bu Pa Hai Ding?

You are AFAR Bawa Hia Sino.

Stupid Brian Dum Gai.

Small House Tai Si Pa Si.

Your price is too high. Su Bai Jiam Ting.

You need a Jiam Jih . Chim Tu Pai.

It's very dark in here. Wai So Hitu.

Has your flight been delayed? Hee Ling Wei Ting?

This is a new aesay case. Sis Ba Ging.

You are not very intelligent. Yo Bo Dum.

I got this for free. Ai Sio Pei.

I am not guilty. Wai I Bang Hit!

Phones may a little bongus. Wei Ho Sino?

Stay out of sight. Lei Le.

He is cheating his cat. Wa Hang Ga.

That's not right. Bum Ting Heng.

He is a fat man. Wan Bo Gai.

The lights are out. Tolight. Hon Seng.

The hora gave away okay and Macahatia sausages but no red envelopes. We are in a bear market. While the Hong Kong Chinese performed their dragon dance, the stock market on Thursday and Friday was on quiet, that time seemed to drag on.

Ex Chinese habits really learn to eat with toothpicks?

* * *

The DOW slumped 270 points after it was announced that the third successive declining index, which covers 90 percent of the economy, reached From 54 to 47.9 in a month. I find that impossible to believe and expect it to be revised upwards next month to 48 or thereabouts.

For those who do not understand how this index works, a figure of 50 means that employment outside manufacturing, i.e., service industries, is static.

If the figure is above 50, as it has been for years, then jobs are being created; if it falls below 50, then there is a net loss of jobs.

A figure of 47 would be bad but it would indicate that the loss of jobs was proceeding slowly; a figure of 41.9 indicates that there is a rapid loss of jobs and the figure of minus 17,000 for last month might actually be true.

If this figure is correct, then the first quarter should be negative in terms of GDP and we are halfway to a recession.

The DOW fell every day and closed with a loss of 9.4 percent on the week. Both the DOW and the Nasdaq have fallen 20 percent, indicative of a bear market.

Now we can appreciate why Bernanke felt it necessary to slash interest rates by 75 basis points and then, nine days later, by another 50 basis points.

Further reductions in March are quite likely, better than even money.

The stimulus package has been approved by both Houses and President Bush but it will still take until mid-year to distribute the rebates. We should see no increase in the unemployment rate over the next one or two quarters, combined with a reduction in consumer spending.

A census showed that most of the rebate would be used to pay off debts, some would be saved and only a portion spent, on the effect might not be as great as hoped for.

The FED is aware of the bogey of inflation but hopes it will recede as the economy slows. One of the main factors is the price of oil, which was expected in fall below $90 a barrel, possibly close to $75. However, this will not happen because Opec has indicated that, if necessary, it will cut production in March in order to keep the price above $95.

The European Central Bank has intimated that it is ready to reduce rates from the present 4 percent and the euro has weakened somewhat. The Bank of England is almost certain to cut its rate next week from its present high of 5.5 percent. The situation in the United Kingdom is similar to the United States, as the economy is slowing down and house prices are falling.

Australia, on the other hand, has just raised rates to 7.5 percent and the Aussie dollar has appreciated 17 percent against the US dollar over the past year. Money is pouring into the country because of Australia's huge volume of resources and the high prices being received. Miners are demanding higher wages and unemployment is at an all-time low. Even success brings headaches.

There is no let up in Japan and the situation is one of decreasing wages, static prices, static consumer spending and an aging population. The yen needs to remain at its current level because, if it strengthens against the dollar, the huge export component will be badly hit. Japan has no energy resources of its own and relies exclusively on exports.

By comparison, the Philippines is in good position. Half of our energy resources come from geothermal, hydroelectric and wind power provided by the private sector. Last year, we grew at 7.3 percent, but this year it will probably fall to 6 percent.

Still, that's not bad when compared with first-world countries that are struggling to grow at 2 percent.

The President wants to introduce a stimulus package of P75 billion, mainly in infrastructure projects, but this will mean abandoning the promise of a balanced budget. The Senate and Congress will have to decide on this.

The political situation in the Philippines is worse than usual with the ouster of JDV and his threat to join the Opposition's party and put them in totally. The disclosure of Lozada, who has opted to testify on the ZTE project, and Neri, asking the palace to protect him from arrest by the Senate, are creating consternation abroad.

Net foreign selling of our equities continues unabated, and in January, foreign brokers sold a record P13.50 billion, breaking the record of P9.4 billion in October 2003. Total foreign selling in 2007 amounted to P628 billion, well over twice the P288 billion in 2006.

"If this trend continues," said Francis Lim, we will lose in six months all the net foreign buying we picked up last year. The peso was little changed on the week and the market continues to decline, mirroring Wall Street.

Budget allocation for interest payments declining, says DBM

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE SHARE OF INTEREST PAYMENTS in the government's total expenditure last year went down to 23 percent from about a third in the past years since the Asian financial crisis that started in 1997, the budget department said.

In 2000, interest payments accounted for 30 percent of the government's total expenditure of P1.094 trillion.

Budget Undersecretary Laura Pascua yesterday said the government spent P266.66 billion in 2007 to pay interest on its borrowings. This marked a 7.4 percent drop from the P303.11 billion recorded the previous year.

"We [government] are beginning to reduce the share of interest payments in the government's expenditure, and this is quite a favorable development," Pascua said after yesterday's briefing on the government's 2007 fiscal performance held at the Department of Finance.

Spending for interest payments last year was also lower by P56.9 billion than the P323 billion ceiling under the budget program for 2007.

The DOF said the P26.9 billion in interest payment savings were diverted to social services projects of government-owned and -controlled corporations.

The government pays interest on debts—incurred by selling bonds and borrowing from foreign lending agencies—using operational revenues such as tax collections and gains from sale of state-owned assets.

The principal debt, however, are paid using borrowed money.

The government has been criticized for allocating at least a third of its budget for interest payments, as this left little room for social services and infrastructure. It, however, remained relgious in paying its liabilities promptly so as not to adversely affect the country's credit standing.

For this year, Pascua said 34 percent of the national budget or P1.2 trillion was allocated for interest payments. She said this level could actually be much lower if interest rates would remain low.

The lower than programmed interest payments last year was partly due to the drop in interest rates on government borrowings. The rate on the 91-day treasury bill, for instance, was expected to average between 4 and 4.5 percent, but the actual figure was only about 2 percent.

The strengthening of the peso was also credited for the lower payment savings. The DOF said the appreciation of the peso reduced the peso value of the government's foreign-currency-denominated debts.

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Peso ...

From page B1

The Philippine peso was the day's top loser, falling as much as 0.6 percent from Friday's close.

Investors reportedly discount the currency amid mounting fears of a US recession.

But they said that the wide interest rate gap between the Philippines and the United States offered support over the long term.

"I think the weekly economic numbers point, especially with the [US Philippines] interest rate differential widening," said a trader.

The US Fed funds rate has fallen to 3 percent compared with the Philippine policy interest rate at 5 percent.

Stable Asian listing weighed down by lackluster stock markets across the region, the domestic market is also concerned whether government could boost collection of tax revenues this year to support its goal of balancing the budget.

The government has been operating in the red since 1998.

In 2007, the much-improved fiscal position was supported by proceeds from large privatization and incentive which are considered non-recurring revenues. Reuters

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BPO sector pushes perks to combat strong peso

By Raoul W. Dumlao

THE BUSINESS PROCESSING Association of the Philippines yesterday reiterated calls for the government to extend incentives that would help investors keep afloat amid a strong peso.

Oscar R. Salazar, BPAP chief executive, told industry players from here and abroad yesterday that the strong peso was one of four main challenges that the dollar-earning sector is facing this year.

Salazar spoke during the opening of the two-day e-Services Global sourcing Conference and Exhibition being held at SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

BPO sector revenues reached $4.5 billion in 2007 and the industry hopes this would grow to $7 billion by end-2008.

"The question that the industry asks [about the peso's strength against the dollar] is: How much longer?" he said. "Incentives would help keep industry players above water while this prevails."

In a position paper giving support to pending bills in Congress related to the rationalization of incentives, BPAP had said keeping the perks would help the country overtake India as "the most attractive" business process outsourcing destination in the world.

Last January, Salazar said government's policies on incentives needed to be geared to help the BPO sector as it positions itself to corner the next wave of growth in the outsourced offshoring and outsourcing market.

Also, BPAP's roadmap 2010 report, which was launched last October, pointed out that incentives were a major consideration for investors deciding to locate in the Philippines.

"Consequently, the industry believes it is imperative that the government support the industry by putting in place a series of incentives with highly competitive investment packages for investors," Salazar said.

He explained that the goal was to increase the Philippines' global market share from a "meager" 6 percent, a fraction of the 65 percent enjoyed by India.

"Most Asian countries such as India, China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam offer different incentives to foreign investors," Salazar said.

"Investors (that go to) India have traditionally enjoyed a 10-year income tax holiday while in the Philippines it is six to eight years," he added.

Junk incandescent bulbs, DOE says

By Abigail L. Ho

ACTING ON SUGGESTIONS MADE at the close of the Energy Summit last week, the Department of Energy is stepping up efforts to phase out incandescent bulbs in the country by 2010.

Within ten years, Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes said the country should be able to end the hassles of shifting to compact fluorescent lamps by way of lower energy consumption and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

According to a Philippine National Standards study, CFLs—which are more expensive...last five times longer and use 80 percent less energy than incandescent incandescent bulbs.

At reach, the DOE, through its Philippine Efficient Lighting Market Transformation Project, said huge savings could be generated from getting the estimated 7.8 million households in the country to switch from incandescent bulbs to CFLs.

The savings could be in the form of deferred investments in power, non-capacity and in lower electricity bills for consumers.

A similar study from the Philippine Lighting Industry Association (PLIA) showed that if all 66 million incandescent bulbs still in use in the country would be replaced by CFLs, the country could forge around $300 million worth of oil imports each year and the generation of 82 billion worth of power—or around 2,000 megawatts (MW) at peak time.

Considering the results of these studies, Reyes said the DOE would "strongly support any move in Congress to pass a bill towards the phaseout of [incandescent bulbs] and provide technical data necessary to complement the effort."

This, he said, would help the country achieve its target of 10 percent energy self-sufficiency by 2010.

		Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	1.00	1.00000	44.34
Japan	Yen	0.00	0.00870	0.39
United Kingdom	Pound	1.34	1.34010	59.44
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.09	0.13000	5.77
Switzerland	Franc	0.61	0.60140	26.68
Canada	Dollar	0.77	0.76920	34.12
Singapore	Dollar	0.49	0.71200	31.58
Australia	Dollar	0.64	0.88	39.40
Taiwan	New	0.02	0.03	1.07
Thailand	Baht	0.02	0.03	1.33
South Korea	Won	0.00	0.00	0.05
China	Yuan	0.09	0.13	5.77
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.21	0.29	12.85
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.00	0.00	0.00
Vietnam	Dong	0.00	0.00	0.00
India	Rupee	0.02	0.03	1.07
Philippines	Peso	0.02	0.03	1.00

Shares close ...

From page B1

Turnover was thin at 775.18 million shares worth P1.6 billion pesos (US$ 37 million).

"Investors have been sidelined by the precarious outlook for the global economy and the ongoing financial crisis," said Ikemizu Macapagal of Westlink Global Equities.

A senate public hearing is looking at allegations that allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo bullied officials into approving a bloated telecommunications contract that supposedly led to $130 million in kickbacks.

The prospect has since been scrapped.

"Investors remain very cautious. The political turmoil at home has further unsettled a market already under pressure because of the weakening US economy," said Ginny Yap of Regina Capital Development Corp.

US stocks finished a dismal week Friday, mired in disappointing economic data and uncertainty surrounding bond insurers that face potential credit rating downgrades weighed on investor sentiments. AFP

For whom the PSE bell toils

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bernal III

JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS, I HEARD WHISpers in the stock market questioning the IPO claim of a newly listed mining company to gambling-related operations in Palawan.

The company is none other than Oriental Peninsula Resources Group, led by the high profile Caroline Tanchay, who owns but photo-ops with Cha Cha at the Palace.

From nondescript sand hatchery silks, I heard that some investors were unhappy about the supposed "disclosure" on the Oriental Peninsula IPO.

In effect, such talk strikes at the very heart of the Philippine stock market.

Really, how honest and true are the claims made by companies doing all these IPOs lately in their investment prospectus?

How more disturbing is the silence of both the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) and even the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Hell, IPOs are supposed to be good for the entire stock exchange industry. The brokerage houses make a lot of money from them.

In whose response, of course, is an entirely different question!

***

IN THE IPO prospectus of Oriental Peninsula, anyway, the company indicated that it controls over 2,000 hectares of melled mines in Palawan.

The prospectus even showed photographs of mine sites, complete with equipment, structures and such.

Now it so happens that the company is also involved in a number of court cases over another 2,000 hectares of mines.

On the other side of the court cases is a company called Platinum Group Metals Corporation, which operated the same nickel mine in Palawan for several years.

According to the chair of Platinum Metals, Ramon Atayde, personnel of Platinum Metals still guard the mine site.

Meaning really, that Platinum Metals was still the occupant of the site at the time of the Oriental Peninsula IPO.

Atayde learned of the claim of Oriental Peninsula in its IPO prospectus regarding the mining site under construction in the course and Platinum Metals consequently complained to both the SEC and the PSE.

Platinum complained, for instance, that the photographs of the mine site shown in the prospectus of Oriental Peninsula seemed to have been taken from outside the site.

Atayde added that Platinum Metals had only stopped its operations at the Palawan nickel mine because of the court cases.

And what did the SEC and the PSE do about the information from Platinum Metals on the claim of Oriental Peninsula?

Both the PSE and the SEC, according to Atayde, had told his group that it was too late for both the SEC and the PSE to do anything about it.

Even if, mga kuwing, the full-out curse to protect the public investors? Or well?

***

THE CHAIRMAN, chairman of the nickel deposit in Palawan is a company called Olympic Mines and Development Corp., a company owned by the Lucsons family, at the helm of the former Centrobank governor Gregorio Licaros.

Olympic Mines had an operating agreement with Platinum Metals for years, even at that time the world price of nickel was only $3 a pound, compared to today's $11 a pound.

All of a sudden, Olympic Mines wanted to take the Atayde group's Platinum Metals out of the picture, and is bring in a company called Bodmetals Resources Corp.

THE COUNTRY just raised the economic crystal ball of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and all other institutions G-e, foreign banks) that do a lot of guesswork about a country that they know nothing much about, thank you.

Among the Philippines apparently posted a growth rate last year—7.2 percent—that was higher than that of the other major Southeast Asian economies like Malaysia and Singapore.

And so are we on the way to economic development in heaven, do you think?

Well, the biggest reason for such a big jump in the GDP growth rate, actually was the almost 5 percent growth last year of the agricultural sector.

As you know, agriculture still accounts for almost 20 percent of the entire economy. If agriculture performs well, the entire GDP should only show good results.

But the real news is that the remarkable performance by agriculture last year was achieved despite the dry spell that struck Luzon's palay and corn areas in Luzon, for instance, starting in the middle of 2007.

How did the agriculture sector do it? Part of the answer, according to government sources in the Cabinet, was the new technique adopted by the Department of Agriculture.

It seems that Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, obsessed with the effects of the so-called climate change on Philippine agriculture, introduced a technique called QTR.

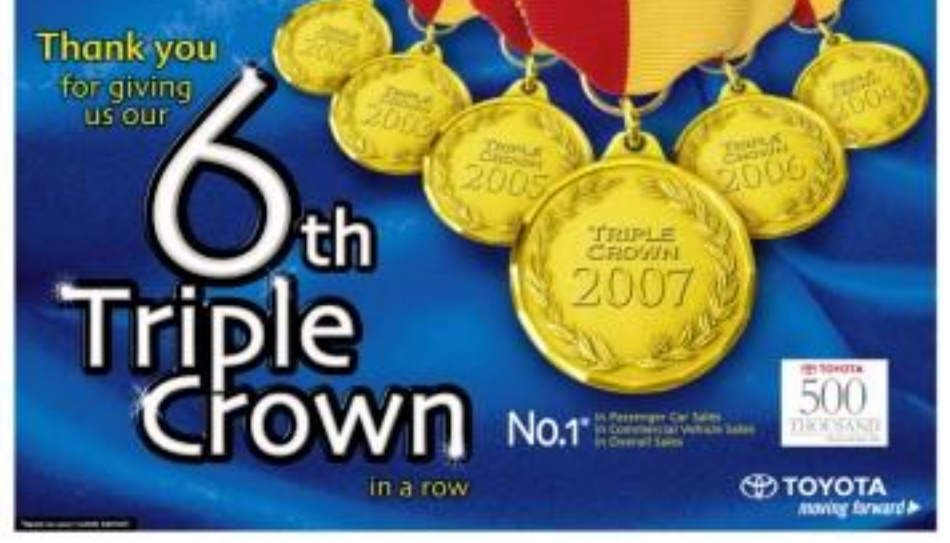
Whaaat? It's short for "quick turnaround," in which the government simply forced the rice and corn farmers to go for a third planting season, instead of just two.

And so, last year, our palay harvest went up by almost 6 percent to 16.24 million metric tons, with a price value to P5.80 billion, while corn yields increased by almost 17 percent to 6.736 million MT, worth almost P66 billion.

And so we have to give it to this administration—meaning, the cards! I'm a change, okay!

The government also spent about P5.1 billion for agriculture infrastructure last year, which was 10 times the P500-million penalty spending in the past.

Really, it is hard to go wrong if you spend money on food.



Employee pension fund raises stake in SMC

By Elizabeth Ireiche-Lucero

SAN MIGUEL CORP. RETIREMENT plan, the employee pension fund of San Miguel Corp., has raised its stake in the food and beverage giant to more than 17 percent as of January this year from 11 percent last year, after buying some shares held by company chair Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., informed sources said.

In a separate ownership report to the Philippine Stock Exchange, SMC Retirement said that as of January 2008, it owned 12.96 percent of class A shares and 4.45 percent of class B shares of SMC.

Last year, sources said SMC Retirement acquired shares held by companies controlled by Cojuangco equivalent to 2 percent of the company.

On May 31, 2007, the Sandiganbayan gave Cojuangco permission to dispose of the SMC shares held by his corporations.

Shares held by Cojuangco's firms were disputed for having been allegedly illegally acquired during the administration of late President Ferdinand Marcos. Cojuangco was said to be a close associate of Marcos.

Cojuangco had told the court that proceeds of the sale would be used by several of his companies to pay loans from United Coconut Planters Bank and the Bank of Commerce.

The said holdings form part of the 30 percent original block of SMC that Cojuangco and 44 of his companies claimed to own, which was recovered by the government.

The government claimed these shares were acquired with the funds from a coconut levy imposed by Marcos on coconut farmers from 1971 to 1982. Cojuangco was the levy fund's administrator.

Also last year, SMC Retirement bought the 6 percent held by some pension fund Government Service Insurance System.

Not reflected in the books of the company yet is the sale of the 11-percent stake in SMC by SM Investments Corp., the flagship firm of mall magnate Henry Sy, to SMC Retirement for P17 billion, sources said.

Compromise on VAT issue pushed

Keep tax on oil but use funds for education, health care

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PUBLIC FINANCE INSTITUTE OF THE Philippines (PFIP), an organization of top fiscal and public administration experts, is seeking a middle ground on the debate on value-added tax on oil, underscoring the 12 percent consumption tax but raise the fund get for direct poverty alleviation programs.

PFIP, chaired by former Finance Secretary and Asian Institute of Management president Roberto de Ocampo, conducted its own research and estimated a potential loss of only P6 billion—from the suspension of the VAT on oil as proposed by Senator and former Trade Secretary Mar Roxas.

The organization, however, admitted the proposed suspension would not meet the poverty target and that it would only benefit the middle and high-income classes.

"But the measure is hard to resist in a scenario where collecting agencies are only able to collect about 60-65 percent of the potential VAT tax base and where VAT revenues do not seem to make a perceptible dent on poverty," the PFIP said in a position paper.

The PFIP membership list includes a number of former high-ranking civil servants such as former Finance Secretary and Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. president Jesus Estanislao, former Finance Undersecretaries Romeo Bernardo and Milwida Guevara, former Bureau of Internal Revenue/Customs Commissioner Guillermo Parayno and former chief of National Tax Research Institute Angel Estrigo.

They said the right thing to do would be to adopt a "middle ground" framework where the interest of the majority would be served while the fiscal standing of the economy would be preserved.

"This requires that the VAT on oil is maintained but the additional revenues generated should be used for purposes that directly address the problems of poverty, such as improving basic education and health," PFIP said.

"Congress can earmark part of the VAT proceeds for specific programs that have been found to have improved the lives of the poor. Local governments and civil society organizations that have demonstrated outstanding performance in service delivery can be given access to the fund," the paper added.

The organization added that guarantees for accountability, transparency and evaluation should be designed as part of the programs.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves warned that the removal of the 12 percent VAT on oil would impact the government's bid to achieve a balanced budget and would reduce revenue by P54 billion.

Teves said the VAT suspension would ease the adverse impact of the rising oil prices on the people through an immediate reduction in pump prices by P5 per liter; P4 per liter for diesel and up to P90 per 11 kg cylinder of LPG.

"The Secretary is correct. The Senator is also not wrong, but both are only partly correct," PFIP said.

Based on the group's estimates, the revenue cut would only be about P6 billion.

"Because of the tax credit/tax deduction mechanism, the suspension of VAT on oil products will not diminish by more than that amount. This is because producers are able to deduct the VAT on oil from their output VAT," it said.

Vitarich setting aside ₱50M for capex this year

By Amy R. Remo

FEED AND LIVESTOCK FIRM VITARICH Corp. has earmarked P50 million for capital expenditure this year.

The amount will be used for facilities upgrade and for efforts to obtain food safety certification for the firm's feed mills.

In a briefing, Vitarich chair Baptista M. Sumulong explained the company wanted to get the food safety certification which was a crucial requirement especially for those exporting to Europe.

"All our feed mills have either ISOs and/or certifications, but not all have certification for food safety," he added.

Part of the capex will be funded internally while the rest will be financed by loan, non-performing assets, Sumulong said.

The safety certification, he said, would help the company achieve its sales growth target of 11% percent for the feed business to about P2.3 billion this year.

The improved growth would be fueled by rising demand from the aquaculture industry and by the rising prices of feeds.

Feed prices are expected to increase by 10-20 percent this year, Sumulong added.

He added that the P240-billion feed industry—which included commercial producers and integrators—was expected to benefit from the expanding business of growing new aquaculture species, including Arapaima.

The depopulation of the hog industry due to animal diseases, however, would dampen the feed industry's growth.

RHI gets ₱4.7-B loan

LISTED SUGAR CONGLOMERate Roxas Holdings Inc. (RHI) has obtained a P4.69-billion loan from Banco de Oro EPCI Inc. for its capacity-expansion projects and the construction of an ethanol fuel plant.

The company needs a total of P6.3 billion for these projects and for the refinancing of maturing obligations.

Under the plan, RHI will expand the operations of its sugar milling and refining subsidiaries to increase its revenue-generating capability and enhance its cost competitiveness.

This is in preparation for the lowering of sugar tariffs to 5 percent from 20 percent beginning 2010 in line with the tariff reduction schedule of the Asean Free Trade Agreement, which the country signed in 1992.

Under its capacity-expansion program, RHI intends to purchase the equipment of two sugar milling firms—one in the United States and the other in Australia. These will be installed in RHI plants and raise the company's capacity by 12 percent.

"The company plans to borrow another P1.7 billion from two other banks to complete the P6.30-billion capital needs for this year.

RHI has tapped Macquarie Securities (Philippines) Inc. as its financial advisers.

"We are optimistic that the strengthening and expansion of our sugar business will position us to overcome the threats and take advantage of the opportunities the domestic sugar industry will face," RHI chair and CEO Federico Sunico said.

"We are implementing new systems that will ensure our survival during this period and enable us to remain a strong industry leader," he added.

The company said it will also bring down our operational costs, produce more for less, and still serve as a takeoff point for our entry into the energy sector," Sunico said.

The company is diversifying its business activities by entering into the energy sector through the manufacturing of potable and fuel ethanol.

"The Biofuels Act gives RHI an avenue for growth outside of sugar. The absence of fuel ethanol producers in the Philippines is a big factor as well in the guaranteed market for ethanol, given as a competitive advantage," Sunico said.

RHI president and CEO Evan dave del Rosario Jr. said the company was also planning to expand and build its market share by strengthening its traditional market and capturing more industrial customers to expand its clientele.

"We are also planning to enter new local and regional markets through geographical expansion," del Rosario added.

"Success is a state of mind.
One not only has to be in that state.
One has to live there."

One
CENTRAL

The Philippines' Grand Address of Success

SUCCESS HAS A NEW FACE. AND A NEW NAME.

An extraordinary world opens its doors only to the very best. One Central. Your new place in the privileged location for Makati's A-list, the central business district. Here, the city's best destinations are at your command. Be neighbors with the cream of the corporate world on the greener side of the CBD.
Enjoy convenient access to everything chic in glitzy Greenbelt. And with your proximity to a master-planned network of roads and pedestrian streets, reach the rest of the metro's hot spots with ease. At home, experience all the hello and whistles of opulent CBD living. The residential suites are pre-furnished with modern comforts. And you can choose from rejuvenating treetop, pool or cityscape views. Leisure amenities, a retail row and a state-made rainforest offer hours of recreation right at your doorstep. And an attentive concierge sees to your needs, making each day that much more indulgent. Discover life on the high end. At the country's new landmark of success. One Central.

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LIFESTYLE

Is love making you fat?

By Mitch Felipe

WHEN YOU ARE IN LOVE, you experience diverse emotions that can unwittingly contribute to your eating and exercise behavior and, eventually, weight gain.

It is hard to stop how you feel, but you can do something about controlling your thoughts and responses. It is your responsibility to manage your feelings and inform your partner what is going on and how he/she can help.

Numerous studies show that being in a relationship, especially marriage, will lead to weight gain. Being in love is a wonderful feeling but, for sure, being fat is not what you want.

You want the best for the person you love. And you would not want to gain weight and develop other health problems.

Here is how to deal with common feelings we experience when we are in love to prevent an unhealthy lifestyle:

Happiness

Sometimes, when you are so content, you tend to forget your health and fitness goals. You would rather eat out with your partner than attend your Monday night dance class.

Eating has always been associated with good things in life like oneness and celebration of something good.

Chocolates are delicious and pleasurable to eat, but there are more than a hundred other ways to express your love. You do not need to deprive yourself of food, but you have to learn to be more creative in expressing your sweetness aside from high-calorie gifts.

This Valentine's Day think of other activities that will remind both of you to be a healthy couple. This can be an outdoor activity out of town or a whole night of dancing and moving.

Disappointment

The most common thing that people do when they feel disappointed is to use food for comfort. Be aware of your emotions and think first before you do something like stuffing yourself with food.

Change your thoughts right away and think in advance like, "If I continue in the business of negative emotions, I will gain more weight and feel worse in the end."

Look for other outlets, aside from emotional eating, like strolling around your neighborhood, while temporarily shutting out your thoughts. There are other things, aside from eating, that will make you feel good.

Do not wait too long to express your concerns to avoid another emotional eating incident. Say how you feel, listen to him/her and then choose a solution that will work best for both of you.

Lack of affection

Research shows that happily married couples put on less weight than their unhappily married counterparts. Unsatisfied, unhappy individuals turn to food for consolation.

This continues until they realize that they are gaining weight.

Try to recall situations when you are not satisfied by how much your partner is giving you in terms of time and love. You probably went out several times to buy your favorite chocolate bar or ice cream just to feel better.

The partner will not stop until you get what you really want from the other. Food will definitely not make up for your partner's shortcomings.

Tell your special someone how you feel. Letting it all out with your close friends will also help.

Insecurity

Feelings of insecurity may lead to extreme measures like starving yourself or exercising to the point of injury just to achieve your unrealistic "ideal" body.

These strategies will just give you short-term results. And since you did it all for the wrong reason (out of insecurity of yourself), chances are you will regain the lost weight easily since you did not undergo the gradual, healthy process.

Do not measure your worth as a person or as a lover by your physical attributes. Focus on the positive qualities that make you unique so your self-confidence will be boosted.

Tell your partner what he/she can do so you will feel more confident about your relationship and you will not resort to unsafe and unhealthy solutions.

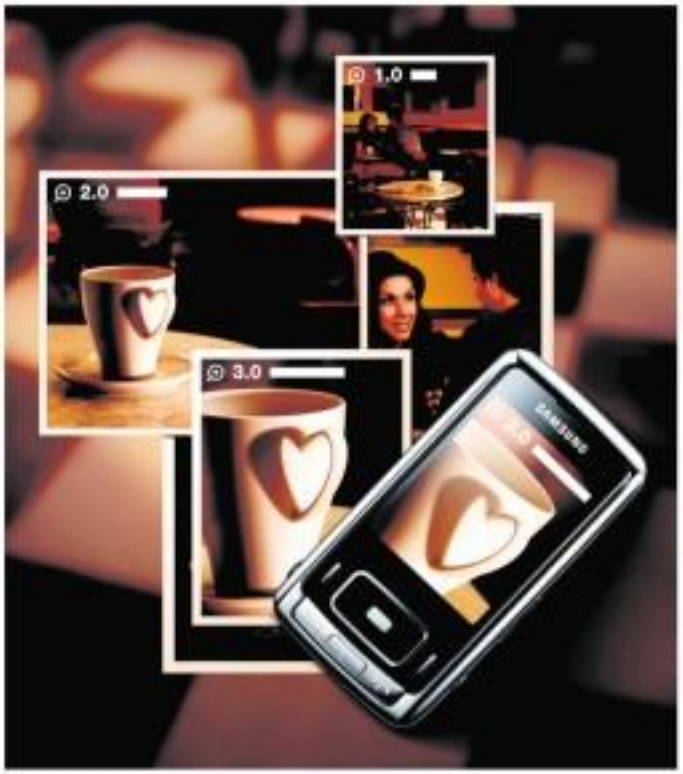
Stress

When your life seems to be losing its balance and you have no time to reward yourself with your favorite recreational activity chances are you would not spend additional time for exercise or to think of and prepare healthier foods at home. Eating more than you should might happen.

Stress results from change of priorities in life, constricted obligations and responsibilities in your family and work, and other personal issues. This usually happens with those involved in a long-standing relationship.

Manage your time and stressors. Ask for support from your partner. Then have time for yourself. Love should inspire you to take good care of yourself first so you have more to offer the other person.

For comments or questions, e-mail the author at info.bhfelipe@gmail.com



Imagine expressing your emotions perfectly

G800

SAMSUNG

BYE-CATCHING Citigold branch heads Marian Bautista-Chua, Nida Capistrano and Jacqueline Miranda

JENNY Lazarra, with renowned geomancer Joseph Chau, Judith Go and Cecille Fernando

Forecast for 2008 'Rat race'

"KAPAMAY" fantasia anchor Noel "Pork" Sy-Quia rented the homeland.

NESTLE Philippines, Inc. chief executive officer Nanda Nandlikhorn

TV personality Marian Chua hosted the "Kapihan" launch.

CHEF Thaddeus Caparoso of the American Hospitality academy (AHA) cooked up a surprise, "Coffee Adobo."

IT WAS A HAPPENING that no one wanted to miss, pulanggaw.

Hot Citigold clients filled the massive SRC Tent in Resorts Global City when the world renowned Citibank Philippines hosted its super-hot Chinese New Year celebrations.

Retail banking hot divorce Agustin Bercides and Citigold brilliant wealth management director Judith Go, together with Citigold branch heads and relationship managers, stood on the entrance for what seemed like hours to welcome tons of investors who came not only to toast the Chinese New Year, but also to hear the latest market updates—here and around the globe—from Citi's resident experts, duhhhngs.

Agustin Q said: "As your financial partners, we realize the importance of giving you all the information you will need as you review your portfolio, and determine your investment decisions in the coming months."

Judith G added: "We take pride in our ability to provide our clients complete and easy access to Citi's vast resources here and abroad and I am proud to say that Citi's research proposition remains unmatched by any local, regional, and global competitor."

Applause, applause from the renowned bosses, duhhhngs.

Whatever it is they want to know Citigold clients are assured of getting relevant insights to aid them in making financial decisions.

The most anticipated moment was when renowned geomancer Joseph Chau generously shared advice on how to invite more prosperity in this Year of the Rat. He also talked about how to avoid mishaps and sickness, and what to do to invite tons of luck before the clock struck 12 midnight and the Year of the Rat began, pulanggaw.

Aptly, the endless flow of booze, complemented by cocktail food, the grand finale, a raffle of prizes, was held. But everyone went home with gift bags that included the Chinese New Year pudding, better known as tikoy cutsh.

So, here's to the sixty year. Kung Hei Fat Choi, my pulanggaw!

Coffee break

They were so much fun and ran interesting three days of getting together for a unique book that deserved an equally unique launch, pulangga.

The country's first coffee table book on coffee, simply called "Kapihan: A Celebration of Coffee in the Philippines," was finally unveiled during chare launches in the country's top bookstores—Fully Booked Bonifacio High Street, Powerbooks Greenhills and National Bookstore Power Plant, duhhhngs.

Instead of the usual cocktails, tons of warm cups of yummy brewed coffee were served to us as we watched a cooking demo showcasing the various chat coffee could offer.

Yes visible were the two hosts of the event, the ex-Hot, Hole-hosted Filipino food critic Noel Sy-Quia, and mega top photographer Neal Oshima, with publisher Tina Gobaco, founder of Art Post Asia and dean of the University of the Philippines' College of Fine Arts, duhhhngs.

Mega executives of Nestlé Philippines, makers of Nescafé, chair and chief executive officer Nanda Nandlikhorn and coffee business unit head Bryan Gilbert-Sook, circulated among the invitees, pulangga.

Providing the book with fantastic recipes was chef Thaddeus Caparoso of the American Hospitality Academy (AHA), whose proactive chef Gene Gordoves and chef instructor Ivan Mejudrico gave a riveting demo of the recipes in the "Kapihan" book.

Ideas of us got super excited over coffee cutsh.

Check out this truly marvelous book, "Kapihan: A Celebration of Coffee in the Philippines," now available in the finer bookstores, pulangga. You'll absolutely be stunned.

Hey, Adobo Coffee anyone?

Call 01.15075, e-mail cindy@anvilpublishing.com or visit www.anvilpublishing.com/newsroom/books/kapihan.html to order this limited edition book.

Art competition

The 46 regional winners of the Philippine Art Awards will vie for the six top prizes of the national competition in Manila.

The artists each from Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao will participate in the Philippine Art Awards 2008. Some 600 artists joined the regional contests this year.

Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. (PMFM) is the first time sponsor of the competition that has a new format this year making it even bigger and

CITYGOLD branch heads Monica Cuneta and Emily Santos

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maxine Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare

CITI'S Florence Ilac, Rona Perez and Felipe Bartolo

A FESTIVE Dragon Dance kicked off the Citigold Chinese New Year celebration.

PHP98 managing director Chris Nelson, with PAA Hero Hands guests of honor National Artist Napoleon Abueva and Irene Arcasas, and PHP98 public affairs and communications manager Bret Gomez

HOTSHOTS behind the awesome project: Publicis Manila's Jam Presbitero, with coffee ambassador Rudy Trillanes, Nestlé Philippines' Julian Alexander H. del Pilar, and publisher Tina Calayco

CULTURE-ORIENTED personalities of Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc., who are behind the Philippine Art Awards, corporate affairs consultant Ray Carreon and government relations manager Michel Mandia, with Luzon winner Rene Capule of Bulacan and Bohol Governor Josielito Mendoza

HEMEDIA Cultus, Cibbi Maja, Chris N., Salvador Perez, and Gabrielle Calion (back row) Alfredo Esquillo, Jr., Patrick Flores, Santo Pinto-Nor, Mabel Montes, Cesca Herce, and Ige Gamboa

CHAIR Nelson with Hinakan winner Bryan Cabrera

HINKAHAN! 5 top winners: Michael Bacol, Oscar Fernando, Rolly Rasco-Peligrino, Burt Lloyd Lleth, Jun Grupo, Maronino "Bahgui" Nonoza, Jr., Arrollation, Bryan Cabrera, and Rodney Yap (back row) PAA Hinakan judge Dil Reyes, Chris N., Santo Pinto-Nor and Dr. Patrick Flores

PAA Manila's 5 top 10 winners: Raffy Magpo, Wyatt Villanueva, Marina Cruz, Mark Andy Garcia, Lyneil Arwyn Perez, Kirby Rasay, Roderick Manatay, and Jesun Mangmalang Jr. (back row) Rodel Tapaya Garcia and Dexter Ty

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime Licayan

Problem may have started in a previous life

I SOMETIMES READ COLUMNS that give advice to people with love or relationship problems when I see an interesting question.

Most of the time, the advice is sound and helpful. Sometimes it is even sprinkled with a good dose of humor.

But I notice that the advisers assume this is the only lifetime the people involved have ever lived. And, because of this, the social issues or sources of the problem is seldom, if ever, addressed properly.

For example, why does a person get so enamored to another when all reason goes against a relationship with him or her? Why cannot one leave the other despite suffering so much emotionally, mentally and even, at times, physically?

If we assume that we have lived only in this lifetime and have never lived before, we may not find the real answer to the deepest questions our souls are aching to know.

A woman who came to my seminar on hardware, karma and Reincarnation several years ago told me before the class began, that she drove her husband out of their house because she could no longer stand his womanizing. She would forgive him and then he would do it again.

So she finally decided to end the marriage once and for all. Her hatred toward her husband knew no bounds.

Role reversal

During the past-life hypnotic regression that I conducted during the seminar, she found out that, in a previous life, she was a man and was the husband of her present husband who, in this lifetime, was a woman. In other words, their roles were reversed.

During that previous lifetime, she was womanizing and cheating on her partner, now the husband she hated so much.

When she discovered this, she was shocked! She realized she was only getting in this lifetime a dose of her own medicine. In the language of the Bible, "What you reap, you also reap."

Reaping what she sowed," She was only meeting her karma.

Karma is the law of universal justice or of cause and effect. It is the adjustment mechanism that refers our actions back to a past life that caused it.

Law of Karma

The Law of Karma is also called the Law of Compensation. It states: "Whatever we do will come back to us nothing less and nothing more." There is no escaping the consequences of karma.

When this woman realized what she did in her husband in a previous life, she felt very sorry. Her hatred toward him completely vanished. Though she did not reconcile with him, her anger toward him was gone.

Emotional healing took place because of knowledge of her past deeds. She was only getting what she deserved.

This is what makes knowledge of past-life and past relationship important. It helps us understand why certain people behave toward us and why we behave toward them in certain way.

The behavior can either be positive or negative because both great hatred and great love bind us to another person.

Hated son

In another class, a woman discovered why she hated her second son. Unlike her other children, she would punish or maltreat him at the slightest excuse. She felt she was being unfair to her second child but she could not understand her behavior or attitude toward him.

During the past life regression, she saw herself as a slave in Africa centuries before. They had a three months' old son very much to them and who would whip or punish them for the slightest infraction. She hated the slave master so much that she turned him and vowed never to forgive him.

This slave master became her son. He never had the opportunity in order to reconcile. Getting him and enact revenge or to forgive. She chose to forgive. Her relationship with her son improved.

If you love somebody very much, you are bound to meet that person again in another lifetime.

So, if you do not want to meet your enemy again in your next life, better forgive him now and release him to his/her highest good. Otherwise, you are bound to meet that person again—and again, until you learn to forgive and release all things.

The next Inner Mind Development seminar will be Feb. 16-17, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Call #337241, 8924809, fax #1599890, or e-mail innerawareness_800@yahoo.com.

CUPPING

BAGONG HENERASYON students

Free computer training programs for the disabled

BAGONG HENERASYON (BH) Foundation, through its APEC Digital Opportunity Center (ADOC) eCare Center, offers people with disabilities free courses on basic computer operation, computer graphics and call center training.

The training aims to make them more competitive in the job market for a more rewarding future.

The programs is an offshoot of the Computer Learning project by BH Foundation, an organization set up by Quezon City Councilor Bernadette Herrera.

A joint from Ados Inteon, through the Commission on Information and Communication, enabled the foundation to expand its computer training program to include people with disabilities.

The grant was in recognition of BH Foundation's effort to "bridge the digital divide" through its Computer School on Wheels program.

Herrera said the project was a way to help members of the community who were differently-abled learn about computer technology and acquire skills needed for employment.

A graduate of the course, Jun de Guzman, is now the Adoc e-Care Center's administrator.

De Guzman decided to volunteer for the program after graduation as his way of reaching out to others with disabilities like him and encourage them to believe in themselves.

Stevie Jordaleo said the program helped widen his horizon and gave him better job options.

Cherry Taconda, a new graduate, has found a job in a logistics company.

Adoc e-Care Center also caters to the hearing- and visually impaired. Volunteer sign-language interpreters help in the training process of hearing-impaired students while Adoc eCare uses audio-enhanced computer applications such as Job Access with Speech and works hand in hand with the Adaptive Technology for Rehabilitation, Integration and Empowerment of the Visually Impaired to teach the visually impaired.

Free registration for ADOC eCare program is ongoing. The Adoc e-Care Center is at 27 Scorpio St., Barangay Nagkaisa, Kaligayan, West Ave., QC. Call 413-8809/ 1414/ 3764806, text 0917-5243109.

Guiding people to a healthy lifestyle

MEDICUS WELLNESS CENTER has a range of services and facilities to guide people towards a healthy lifestyle.

It is an affiliate of the Singapore-based Qlifestyle that operates a diverse range of businesses in the travel and leisure industries.

General manager Kathy Venezuela says customers follow a comprehensive approach to health care with a combination of integrative diagnostic and screening procedures, wellness therapies, spa treatments and fitness activities.

The center, she adds, is run by licensed medical and spa professionals.

Venezuela was nominated recently as Best Medispa in the Eastern Medispa Awards 2007. The awards are sponsored by Medispa magazine, a luxury publication of the Adam Media Group in Hong Kong.

Amorosa has some of the world's most modern equipment like the body Xercise modules (BXs) that shocks blood, urine and saliva to evaluate organ functions and approximate a person's age in terms of body condition.

Also available at Amorosa is the Heraldson Stress Assessment that checks if energy flow is smooth and balanced to enable the body to function properly. Another procedure is the Nerve Meridian Examination that detects the early stages of developing tumors in 12 different sites.

Amorosa offers colonic hydrotherapy, the most modern and comprehensive method of cleansing the system. The center also has spa massage therapies, helping alleviate discomfort and make it easier for clients to deal with the condition.

Amorosa's spa treatments use only the finest infused herbs, essential oils, minerals and sea plant extracts to cleanse, tone and tone the skin, slim down the body and boost the immune system and energy levels.

The fitness studio offers herbs (premixes) and dybelon (medicine) yoga classes three times a week. Yoga develops flexibility, strength and a deepening awareness of the inner resources.

JACUZZI

MEDICard, The Healthcare I Deserve!

What is Heart Failure and its causes?

Take Charge Doc!

It's time to run again

A TOTAL OF 25 CITIES will be scheduled to host local events of the 2008 National Milo Marathon.

Angeles City will host the Feb. 17 staging of the competition. On Feb. 24, the race will move to General Santos City.

Manila, Tarlac, Cebu and Davao will play host simultaneously, a first in the marathon's history.

The start of the annual event was announced during a press conference attended by Nestlé assistant vice president and Milo consumer marketing manager Michelle Cato-Mocelles, North ABF and Milo sports events executive Pet Goc-ong, and National Milo Marathon race organizer Rudy Biscocho.

Also there were Department of Education officials Dr. Soetal Belsolita, Del Inca Zagala and Criselda Mario; Department of Tourism official Cynthia Lalio; and Inquirer Managers Andy Ortiz.

Some 60,000 participants are expected this year.

Other cities that will host the marathon are Batangas, Dumaguete, Bacolod, Iloilo, Roxas, Legaspi, Naga, San Pablo, Tacloban, Tagbilaran, San Fernando, Ligao, Santiago, Baguio, Dipolog, Digkon, Cagayan de Oro and Butuan.

The first event this year was held in Boracay.

Now on its 32nd year, the marathon will include 5K fun run, 5K Cat run, 10K run (Metro Manila leg).

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

Erasing your age

"It takes a long time to become young."
—Pablo Picasso

TIME AND ITS PASSAGE SHOULD wear you right. But you have to make it happen.

You cannot simply sit back and do nothing. That may have been the case with our grandparents and even parents. But that is not for us—unless you want the ravages of time to show on your body.

It may be something like this—at age 30, excessively dry and wrinkled skin; at 40, stiffness in the joints; at 50, high cholesterol and borderline diabetes; at 60 heart disease or osteoporosis (brittle bones).

Some basic facts

• Exercise delays aging, especially the onset of arthritis and osteoporosis. Dr. Williams J. Evans, doctor of nutrition and metabolism at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, said, "There's nothing that reverses sun damage as much as exercise." He said his level exercise like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, walking short distances even if for only 10 minutes twice a day could be good.

• Gaging out of the sun prevents wrinkles.

• Relaxation and meditation are stress-busters and can prevent illnesses.

• High vegetable diet is packed with enzymes and connected to better health. Eat high cancer foods like leafy green veggies, carrots, broccoli that are heavy on beta carotene (vitamin A).

• Doing crossword puzzles and regular reading can delay/prevent memory loss.

• Type A personalities (active, outgoing, pressure-driven individuals prone to anger) may age faster than calmer types.

• Eating scrupulously and absolutely will lead to diseases—obesity, diabetes, heart disease.

• Get sorry. Do not worry about uric acid because you will not take a gallon of milk like say macadamia, almonds, walnuts. Nuts are rich in antioxidants.

• Go fruity. Nutrient-packed fruits give your body power. Try to observe your energy level after a serving of bananas, papaya, apples, kiwi, star apple. You will find an instant lift that never swings like panacea cannot give.

Boost youth hormones

You can actually retain your body in its youthful look. How, please:

• Spike up the hormones. The forever-young hormones are human growth hormones that are converted by the liver into anti-aging hormone insulin growth factor and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA). As you grow older, production of these hormones slows down.

Therefore, increasing their production can delay aging. Is it hopeless? Not at all. Diet plays a key role.

The mission: Boost hormone via a high-nutrient diet. Why? Aging is caused by free radical damage; in the cells. One must consume stop the damage through clean, nutrient food.

The choice is simple. Eat your mango-topped cheese cake or eat a fresh mango.

• Keep your blood sugar level steady. Any sudden rise can trigger cortisol (a stress hormone) release. High insulin and cortisol release your DHEA output. Go easy on white temptations (high glycemic food) like white rice, bread, pastries, pasta, snacks. Always combine them with low glycemic food—veggies, beans, protein, soy.

• Never gorge on a large dish of cake or dessert without eating a healthy meal. This might to contain your sugar levels.

• Consume the fish. A high fat diet literally turns off your hormone factory. Saturated fat from animals can do a lot of damage to your health and youthful look.

Age-defying trivia

• Load up on spinach and nitrate-rich. Their high levels of antioxidants can boost your brain.

• Smart, do not fool, your veggies to preserve the vitamins. Better yet, eat your food raw.

• Add more tomatoes to your meal. Lycopene in tomatoes strengthens your immune system and makes your skin glow.

Affirmation for the day

"A tomato a day keeps the doctor away, a carrot a day keeps the wrinkles away."
Love and light!

References: "Age-defying secrets" by Alvin Ireland

Living Food Seminar by Chalur Ignacio, a seminar and detox program, is on Feb. 16. Call 0907-7-123 or 893-25-95/562.

Celebrities' Life with Cory Quirino. Join the morning workout class at Sid Moll of Asia on March 8. Call 37 5197.

THE ADIDAS Porsche Design collection is a fusion of image and design that has iconic brands. Inspired by Classic Porsches, the CL Mid has a classic upper with rich detailing reminders of luxury car interiors, air intakes and designs.

Be original!

GET ORIGINAL WITH SOLDIER. Grab your favorite pair of shoes from Traffic, one of the official distributors of Adidas originals.

Traffic, which has branches in Rockwell Power Plant, The Block, Trinoma, SM Mall of Asia, Shangri-La and Greenhills, has an extensive and diverse collection of Adidas exclusive footwear.

Adidas Originals footwear are offered in several diverse themes. The Running line, inspired by vintage Olympic track styles, and Sport line, a reengineered look underlined by a new and aggressive outsole in contemporary sweet fashion colors.

Adidas' Mobility footwear is driving-inspired. The Gresham Race model presents timeless motoring style with a streamline profile and tire-inspired outsole.

The Porsche design collection, on the other hand, is a perfect combination of rich interior detailing and classic sporty group evocative of the leathers and luxury Porsche car interior.

Urban Core is a mix of rich, exciting leathers combined with meticulous detailing—a blend of the classic and contemporary.

The Flavors of the World collection provides a special blend of sneaker canvas with authentic silhouettes and distress cushion.

Traffic also carries the Adidas Originals 23 series that celebrates different schools, arts and cultures. The series revolves around a variety of key holidays.

Sneaks, clothes and fitness junkies might also want to check out Adidas' newest Court and Football collections at Traffic.

The football collection is mostly composed of the Adidas signature three-stripe. The Impervator design now has its leisure edition in a popular imitation materials leather.

The Court collection is a creative update on the archived pieces from Adidas' dress of previous seasons. The result is a mix of fun and playful colors and sophisticated materials.

THE ADIDAS Arrow is a highly successful spike-less running shoe with more contemporary street fashion colors.

BACK 86 imitation composite leather, this Adidas Superstar is topped with elegant leather at the stripes, lining, tongue and heel patch. For a shoe that has been around since 1969, it remains fresh and stylish.

Free extra hour of relaxation

THE SPA AT CLUB OASIS WELCOME to an additional hour of pampering for free throughout February for those who will avail of ten treatment sessions.

Located in Hotel Royal and Casino Manila, the Spa at Club Oasis offers a complete range of health and beauty treatments like massage, therapy and meditation in luxurious private rooms.

The atmosphere of total serenity is enhanced by the soothing aromas of essential oils, herbs and fruit, as well as the tranquil ambiences.

Call 5451234.

ENTERTAINMENT

Lito Bronio G. Velarde

NOW ON DISC

'Bourne Ultimatum,' 'Knocked Up'

ASSASSIN JASON BOURNE (MATT DAMON) struggles to remember the past. Jesse Alexander and Albert Pinney co-star. Available on DVD and VCD. "Knocked Up," with Katherine Heigl and Seth Rogen, is about a mismatched couple in a one-night stand that results in pregnancy. From Magnavision Home Video.

Shakey's Tropical Bacon Pizza

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The best smoky, tasty bacon you'll ever have...

DELIVERY HOTLINE 77-777 If it's late, It's FREE!

TOURING couple Gregine Gonzalez from the Visayas (see update ON P. 7) "Pinoy Idol" auditions at SM Cebu's Trade Hall here

Method in the madness

'Pinoy Idol' auditions in Cebu involve an 80-man team equipped with 8 cameras, 10 laptops and a precious computer software

(First of two parts)

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

CEBU CITY—THE FOURTH stop in the search for GMA 7's first "Pinoy Idol" took an 80-man production contingent to this Queen City of the South.

Host Raymond Gutierrez pointed out to this writer-bystander that this Visayan island had produced "great singers," among them Pilita Corrales, Dulce and Visitacion.

Still, Jerry Lunaspat, executive producer, was "surprised" by the turnout. Long lines of many-aged aspirants gathered in SM Cebu on the first two days of the three-day tryouts which stopped up here day last weekend.

Largest so far

"This is the largest crowd we've had so far," Lunaspat said. (Previous stops were Cagayan de Oro, Batangas and Iloilo.)

On Thursday program manager Hazel Alcantara estimated they would be seeing 1,000 to 1,500 contestants. "We have to cancel pre-screening (screening) to accommodate everyone."

Mercifully, Alcantara noted, the "Idol" audition process had been fine-tuned by Fremantlemedia, franchise holder of the world-famous reality show.

There's now a little method to the madness.

Alcantara explained: "Everyone [is provided to us] with a computer software that was developed in Indonesia. With this program, all kinds of the entire audition process are linked through the computers in each venue station."

"If a production staffer wanted to verify the background story of a specific contestant, all they have to do is check their laptops," Alcantara said.

Three phases

Before contestants can even stand in front of the three judges—Wynggel Yoyo Ogie Alcasid and Arlene Magkalayo—for assessment, they have to go through phases: registration, pre-screening and results.

For each city-stop, the Talpan network sends a team of at least 80 production people from Manila—equipped with 10 laptop computers and 8 cameras.

"The team is divided into five clockable units," Alcantara said.

"We have the same team in the different auditions so that we don't have to orient fresh recruits every time," said Paolo Luciano, executive producer.

Constant motion

The cameras, especially four units placed in the final judging room, are constantly rolling.

GREENHILLS CINEMAS

THEATRE MART

PROMENADE

The movie is so adorable it will surely put a smile in your face.

27 Dresses

NOW SHOWING

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Facial Care Centre FOR MEN eliminates major skin problems and impurities with its quick, safe and proven-effective technological solutions specifically designed for men's skin.

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Astringents or hide-my-face tactics are not enough to solve acne problems. What you need is an innovative treatment. LIGHTCURE ACNE THERAPY works three times faster than oral medications, pills and injections. With the use of soft intense technology, it erases acne and acne scars on the face, back or other body parts giving you pimple-free, clear skin.

Wrinkles and sagging skin?

Mid-30's but looking 40's? 40's but looking 50's? Get rid of wrinkles and sagging skin that leave you looking tired and dull. Technologically advanced REFIRME non-surgically tightens skin with its electro-optical synergy (eTox), the powerful pair of light and radio frequencies. It rebuilds collagen and elastin which naturally make skin firmer and wrinkle-free. Look young and feel young with ReFirme.

Ugly discolorations and marks?

If there's a Tiger Woods or Lance Armstrong in you who's into outdoor actions, your skin may already be damaged by overexposure to the sun that could lead to skin disorders and may-like dark discolorations on your face. The solution? IPL PHOTO REJUVENATION is safely repairs skin from damage with the use of intense pulsed light. It also eliminates freckles, age spots and brown spots so you can get rid of the ugly marks on your skin.

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MOVIEWORLD

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GALLERIA

1 27 DRESSES • THX
2 THE EYE
3 Indefine: ROXANNE
4 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
5 THE BUCKET LIST
6 MY BROTHER's WIFE
7 IN THE NAME of the KING / ONE MISSED CALL
8 MIST
9 CLOVERFIELD
10 JOHN RAMBO / NATIONAL TREASURE 2

SRMITA

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2 / ONE MISSED CALL
2 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2 / 27 DRESSES
3 THE EYE
4 MIST
5 JOHN RAMBO
6 CLOVERFIELD / SAW IV
7 IN THE NAME of the KING
8 MY BROTHER's WIFE
9 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
10 THE BUCKET LIST

METRO EAST

1 IN THE NAME of the KING / ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
2 MIST
3 27 DRESSES / ONE MISSED CALL
4 THE BUCKET LIST
5 CLOVERFIELD / JOHN RAMBO
6 THE EYE
7 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
8 MY BROTHER's WIFE

NOVALICHES

1 THE EYE
2 IN THE NAME of the KING
3 THE BUCKET LIST
4 GOOD LUCK CHUCK

PIONEER

1 MIST
2 THE BUCKET LIST
3 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
4 THE EYE

STA. ROSA

1 CLOVERFIELD
2 SAW IV
3 ONE MISSED CALL
4 GOOD LUCK CHUCK

LIPA

1 JOHN RAMBO
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
3 SAW IV
4 GOOD LUCK CHUCK

DASMARINAS

1 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
2 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
3 ONE MISSED CALL
4 THE EYE

IMUS

1 THE EYE
2 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
3 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR
4 ONE MISSED CALL

ANGELES

1 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
2 SYDNEY WHITE
3 THE EYE
4 DRAGON WAR

TARLAC

1 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 JOHN RAMBO
3 AMERICAN GANGSTER

STARMILLS

1 DRAGON WAR
2 THE EYE
3 SYDNEY WHITE
4 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
5 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
6 JOHN RAMBO

BACOLOD

1 DRAGON WAR
2 JOHN RAMBO
3 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
4 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
5 SWEENEY TODD
6 MARTIAN CHILD / ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2

ILOILO

1 CLOVERFIELD
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
3 GOOD LUCK CHUCK
4 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
5 P.S. I LOVE YOU
6 SWEENEY TODD

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VISAYAS - MINDANAO

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ENTERTAINMENT

Method...

From page B1

"We want to make sure everything that happens is captured on tape," said Magdangal.

That's every mom, every quip, every snack, every gasp.

"It's segment producer notices that a certain candidate has an interesting story, a camerawoman would follow him or her from pre-casting to final judgment," Alcuetas said.

Ubiquitous sign

Unmistakable was the impossible sign posted on the wall of the holding room at the audition venue: "If you don't want to be seen on TV, leave the area." In fact, everyone who registers for the cynosis signs a waiver allowing the show to air footage...in any way, shape or form.

The Personable software also prevents a rejected aspirant in a contestant from auditioning more than once in the same venue. On other shows, enterprising rejects have been known to change clothes and hairstyle, just so they can rejoin the search call.

Happy to oblige

But everyone in the winding queues at Old Cebu was only too happy to be seen on TV.

Random celebrity reads by production staffers in the crowd yielded aspirants who babbled out their audition songs, and then some, at the drop of a hat.

(Conclusion tomorrow)

WAITING in the holding room

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX

1. Bucket List
2. Good Luck Chuck
3. Alvin & the Chipmunks
4. 27 Dresses

Shang Cineplex E-see Club

NOW SHOWING
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AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	THE MIST	CLOVERFIELD	THE EYE	DRAGONBALL EVOLUTION			
GLORIETTA 4	27 DRESSES	CLOVERFIELD	BUCKET LIST				
	ONE MISSED CALL	DARJEELING LIMITED	THE EYE	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA			
GREENBELT 1	BUCKET LIST	GOOD LUCK CHUCK					
GREENBELT 3	27 DRESSES	BUCKET LIST					
	THE EYE	DARJEELING LIMITED	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA				
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THE EYE	BUCKET LIST					
	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA	27 DRESSES	THE MIST				
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA	27 DRESS	THE EYE	ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS			
MARKET! MARKET!	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA	THE EYE					
	BUCKET LIST	THE MIST	CLOVERFIELD				
TRINOMA	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA	THE EYE	27 DRESSES	BUCKET LIST			
	THE MIST	ONE MISSED CALL	CLOVERFIELD				

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — Artist's Olympic Legends and Chinese New Year Celebration, February 7 - Glorietta 3 Park

Greenbelt — Greenbelt 1 Dinner Theater Presents: BROADWAY SHOWSTOPPERS, Feb. 13,15,16 21; 8pm | Greenbelt 3 Park

Alabang Town Center — Chinese New Year Dragon Dance, February 7, 11am to 2pm

Ayala Center Cebu — Jade Fordham Live, February 13,14,20pm, South Active Parking area

Market! Market! — Nonna Beach Volleyball Mall Tour, February 23, Activity Center

Cinelagik — Rapunzel Philippines presents Hotel 21, February 1 to 17, 2008. For inquiries, pls. call 847-8718 or visit www.rapunzel-philippines.com

Ayala Museum — DRAWINGS OF PHILIPPINE ART. Paintings by Juan Luna, Fernando Amorsolo, and Fernando Zobel. For more info, pls. call 757-7117 or 21 ext. 19 or email museum@ayalamuseum.org

Tri Nonna — Serenades of Trinoma featuring Just Models, February 2 - 8pm, Activity Center; Julia Fordham Live, February 9, 7pm, Activity Center

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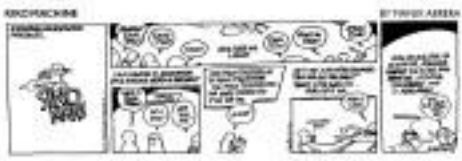
Wud Shoes
Xing Yi
Xpedo
Zeal Bird
Zeitgeist
Zenia
Zebra

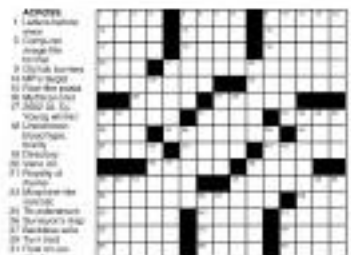
A diary in comics by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA



DAILY CROSSWORD



HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

		9	4	5		1	2	
				7	1	3		
			8			4		
2	6				7			
1		8				6		3
			3				9	1
		6			5			
		5	9	3				
	2	1		4	8	7		

Difficulty Level ★★ 2/11

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HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

4	2	1	3	6	7	5	8	9
8	5	7	9	2	1	4	6	3
6	9	3	5	8	4	7	1	2
7	6	4	2	5	9	1	3	8
5	8	9	7	1	3	6	2	4
3	1	2	8	4	6	9	7	5
9	4	8	6	7	2	3	5	1
1	7	5	4	3	8	2	9	6
2	3	6	1	9	5	8	4	7

Establishing 'psychological dominance' over the prime-time viewing scene

WHEN WE HEARD THAT ABS-CBN was launching three new shows last Jan. 28, we decided to watch the first episode of all three teleseryes. But before we start our mini-reviewers in on the new shows' more promising aspects:

First to hit the TV screen after the news was "Kung Fu Kids," about children with special fighting skills which they use to fight evil. It turned out that it was still early days to these martial arts fight scenes, because the show opted to start with a backgrounder set in China about a school for kung fu that was attacked by some unidentified evil force "tyrants" here. The kung fu masters were killed, but the villainous and ill-kempt opponent to end up (don't ask why) in the Philippines.

Toward the end of the show's first episode, no good-versus-bad motif was made to revolve around a middle-aged, who suspected someone by unleashing some fancy martial arts moves of his own involving—regrettably

Child-friendly

BUT the show's focus remained firmly on its child-like characters, especially on mahagay boy likened by his cop father for the death of his mother. And, just to make sure that the new series' child-friendly bent is clear, its cast even includes two animated mice who "comment" on the action!

Less child-friendly, however, is the show's depiction of some of its child-characters as too "racially" prone and many for parents and they'd be well to a number of them screamed their lines to find that we had to lower the TV set's volume drastically to defend our eardrums.

The second new series, "Lobo," turned out to be a love story with a big difference—a lupus quotient. In fact, it appears that its female lead, Angel Locsin, is playing a she-werewolf! Well, that really is different, and it makes "Lobo" the most attention-calling production of the three new shows that Channel 2 has launched this season.

Where's Angel?

BUT it could take a while before Angel makes her appearance, because the series' first telecast opted to start its story-telling at the very beginning, with Angel's mother, played by Agot Isidro, discovering that she became a werewolf when she turned 21.

We were a bit thrown off by this, because Agot looked decidedly older than 21, but a little suspension of disbelief took care of that casting glitch. In any case, the episode took a lot of time detailing Agot's love for her beau, Bobby Andrews, and their horror and grief when they found out about her clan's cursed existence.

Quite a number of scenes went through pretty much the same emotional territory in this regard, so the first episode ended up feeling repetitious. Let's hope that subsequent episodes are more efficiently paced and edited.

Antichrisctic

THE EVENING's third new series, "Pulis," initially felt anticlimactic, because "Lobo's" "Ultimo" theme came on so strongly. After a while, however, the action drama's high-octane fight scenes turned out to be compelling viewing fare.

Some scenes were derivative, like the one set in a steel beam-protected room, but the "borrowing" was pulled off well, so this viewer remained appreciative.

The pilot episode ended with a bang, with a long sequence set in a Manila cockpit, replete with explosions, energetic crowd movements, "unhanging facial muscles" and other visual highlights. (Firstly, action director Yam Santibad hasn't lost his touch).

Attention-calling 'moments'

THE ACTION series stars Cesar Montano as the title character, but it's even more noticeably a star-making showcase for its younger cast-ers. Julia Clarete, who's given many attention-calling "moments" in the show's first episode. It'll be interesting to see Geoff and Jake during crackling action and acting scenes in the series' upcoming installments.

All in all, we think that ABS-CBN's decision to field these three new series at the same time is a good move, because it establishes "psychological dominance" over the evening programming (literally at least). And the new shows are targeted at different viewer strata, thus offering greater breadth and reach on the prime-time scene.

On HBO

TES. 10:30 p.m., "Heaven Can Wait": What happens when angels make a mistake? Someone goes to heaven before his time is due? With Brianna Brady and Julie Christie.

'Lobo's' different theme comes on strongly

Now online: Updates on your favorite stars

I AM MORE THAN PROUD TO BE AN "adopted" daughter of Bohol. My resilient thanks to my super-host ex-mayor Rhyan Dan Lim of Tagbilaran... I'm charming with Dr. Chanlyn and mega couple Hans and Lani Sobrad for spoiling me in more ways than I deserve every time I'm in Bohol.

Dagdag kilometer stint is now dependable Mark Meneses, Kabalikwas my younger Tess Romanapeng and Libby of Stonewatch Hosting Resort, which is always my first stop in Cherokee Hills Country. The Schmitt twisted me in the opening of their grandson Peacock Garden Hotel in Iga. It's a chateau on a hilltop with an awesome view of the sea where did. photo-pop

Also at the free event Bandolene Cruz, Joselito Rosales, Rachel Alejandro, Raquel and Leo Aglugsod, Mae and Linda Bonilla, Rommel and Cathy Montano and PR man Dimsdale Ramirez. We have swimming Hans because Cruz kept calling her like it was an heavily update. "Sweep ng feeling na nilipasawat sil ng sarili," she said, giggling. "We just need space for two, though he didn't see and the kids daily."

V-day b-day gift

BCBO hasn't decided what to give his GF Heart Evangelista for her Valentine birthday. "But now I won't scrimp and just give her one gift. Gusto pa siguro ng kotse and use the box birthday. After sending the fireworks here at Peacock, Iriga long nainip me that would be a great way to greet Heart."

Rachel told me she and her BF have no stand-up plans yet. We were teasing Lizelle that Marc were ahead to their room to prepare for their solo honeymoon.

Heard that John Lloyd Cruz and his GF Lia Ty were also in Bohol but they secluded themselves in Tokyo Bento on Pamplico Island. We all wished we could listen also at Peacock where we felt like European royalty while being pampered the warm Boholano way.

Guess who

GUESS who this very star is. He was a major headache during an out-of-town show of a reputable company. The organizer lamented, "We paid her a downpayment for two shows but she missed the first one. We were given the runaround when we were begging her to fly to the venue a day before the show for briefing. It came out she accepted another gig to sing overlap ang schedule nya. Pasalamat nga siya hindi pa siya nag-host hahh di na siya kasi! Because of tears nito say "yes" to all rockets (but count their wet. After the deal is signed and sealed, will they deliver?

Network awards

ABS-CBN scored a grand slam, sweeping 16 awards including the top plums...Best Network, Best AM & FM Station...as the Gandingan 2008 given by the University of the Philippines Los Baños Community Broadcasters Society. The Kapamilya network continues its winning streak in the first quarter of 2008.

Stars' status

I GET a kick out of checking my friends' status on Facebook.com. It's a glimpse of the changes they go through daily. Here are some of their updates:

• Erich Jury Reyes welcomes the Year of the Rat with feline hunger.

• Bimbim Gloria got her cavalcade of stunners and visitation of E.J.I.I.S. Foundation.

• Geneva Cruz is packing her stuff for her trip back to the Philippines.

• Patricia Luna has got a new toy Wiiohoo!

• Angelo de Leon is searching Rodolfo Lozada Jr. in the Senate hearings.

• Si Rengie is still in awe of the Peepsie concert.

• My FB status says: Dolly thinks that love is the question and not the answer.

E-mail wattsup@abscbnpr.hotpyinbox.com.

FEEDBACK

Network war?

Frans Francis Rosarion (francis.rosa@abscbnbox.com), Tacloban City:

I'm one of the many Filipinos who are getting tired of the controversies carelessly being hauled against each other by network giants ABS-CBN and GMA-7.

I think this latest brouhaha on the tampering of ratings is unnecessarily being blown out of proportion as the viewing public would unfortunately follow the controversy by tuning in to both channels.

Obviously the people behind these two channels are driven enough to capitalize on this issue because they know that any good or bad publicity is still publicity."

OPENS FEBRUARY 20

THE DESPERATE HOUSEWIFE IS NOW A DESPERATE GHOST IN THE YEAR'S MOST HILARIOUS ROMANTIC COMEDY

EVA LONGORIA PARKER

PAUL RUDD · LIZZ BELL · JON BIGGS

OVER HER DEAD BODY

IT WAS A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN... UNTIL AN ANGEL TOOK HER AWAY

OPENS FEBRUARY 20

THE WORLD IS POSSESSED BY THE EVIL OF MEN

DIANE LANE

UNTRACEABLE

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

BIG SHOWS AT THE BIG DOME

CONNIE FRANCIS
THE GREATEST HITS SHOW
FEBRUARY 14 | 8PM

ARANETA CENTER EVENTS

GRAND CLEARANCE SALE
70% OFF GREAT SELECTIONS CENTERMODE NOW UNTIL FEB 15

THE PERFECT MATCH THIS VALENTINE SEASON!

RICHARD Gutierrez MARIAN Rivera

My Bestfriend's Girlfriend

Love comes in unexpected packages

Directed by Mark A. Reyes V. DGPI

OPENS TOMORROW